

**A LECTURE**  
ON  
**THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY.**

READ BEFORE THE AGRA COLLEGE  
LITERARY SOCIETY;

*Under the Presidentship*

OF

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Second Edition.

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*Price Re. 1-8-0*

**1924.**

Printed at the  
LAKSMI PRINTING WORKS.  
*370, Upper Chitpore Road, Calcutta.*



30202  
Delivered at 12/50  
H. A. LL. I. J. J. J.  
ALLAHABAD

## PREFACE.

This Lecture, a portion of which was read before the Agra College Literary Society, was prepared solely for the benefit of the students reading the Vedanta Sutras and the Vedanta Sara with me in the Agra College. The main object of the Lecture is to give beginners a general outline of the highly abstruse system of the Vedanta Philosophy, and to examine briefly its value when tested by the modern ideas of Western Philosophy. The results of modern Science have also been adduced to show that the Vedanta Philosophy can be interpreted agreeably with them.

For amateur readers, not acquainted with the terms of Sanskrit Philosophy, the technicalities of the Vedanta system very often stand in the way of its being

understood properly. For this reason I have tried my best to avoid them, and where they were unavoidable, the technical expressions have been explained in simple English. The English rendering of the Sanskrit extracts quoted, will, it is hoped, enable readers to understand their application even if they are not acquainted with the Sanskrit language.

The object of the Lecture being to explain only the Philosophical phase of the Vedanta system, care has been taken to prevent it from clashing with any other religious system.

In presenting this Lecture before the Public, I beg openly to state that I have not ventured to introduce any new opinion on the subject of the Vedanta Philosophy, nor have I suppressed anything of importance with the object of prejudicing the readers in favour of this system of Philosophy.



I have moreover, quoted the ideas, and in many places the expressions, of different authors on the subject, where they appeared to me to throw light on any point. The details of the Vedanta system have been left untouched as being beyond the scope of this manual.

M. L. B.

*Agra, February 15th, 1895.*

## Preface to the Second Edition.

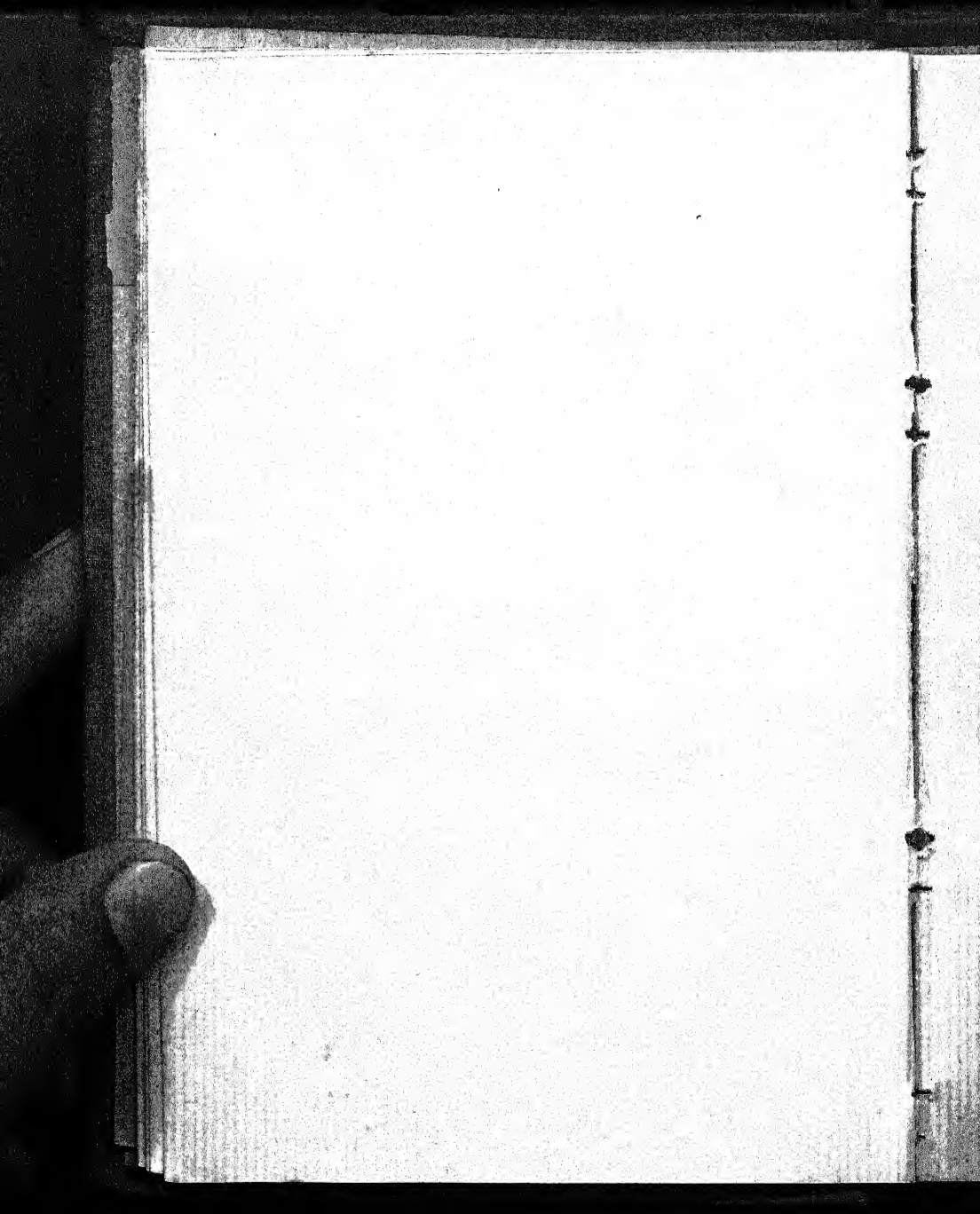
All copies of the first edition being exhausted it has become necessary to issue a second edition of this book. Advantage is taken of this opportunity to include some important aspects of the Vedanta Philosophy in the form of an appendix.

My best thanks are due to Principal S. C. Bhattacharya M. A. of Ambala for help in the preparation of the appendix.

M. L. Bhattacharya.

*Calcutta,*  
*10th October 1924.*

A LECTURE  
ON  
THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY.



MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,

Before beginning my Lecture, I beg to offer my thanks to the members of the *Agra College Literary Society*, for doing me the honour of permitting me to approach them on a subject which is, at present, an every-day topic with many learned oriental scholars and which is one of the dearest possessions of us—the unfortunate Hindus of India.

At the outset, gentlemen, I must inform you that our subject will be essentially a philosophical and not a religious one. It is neither desirable nor very pleasant to handle here the religious phase of our subject, and so I shall gladly leave it to be judged by the individual choice and discretion of my educated audience.

Before dealing with any system of philosophy, it behoves us to explain briefly the necessity and utility of philosophy in general. Firstly, people, and often



learned people, say that the world is too busy to listen to purely theoretical speculations. In reply to this I may be allowed to remark, in the language of a great philosopher, "that philosophy is indispensable, inasmuch as, in not philosophising, we must philosophise." To make the idea clear I may say, that in the very act of giving our reasons against philosophy, we must have recourse to philosophy itself. Thus, roughly speaking philosophy means, explaining anything by applying our reasoning faculty, and this we cannot help doing every day of our life. Such is human nature. Secondly, that philosophy is theoretical is not a reasonable objection. For we see that the theory of gravitation, the theory of heat, the theory of electricity, the theory of medicine, &c., are no more than theories and yet they are not despised as such. On the contrary, they are universally accepted and admired.



Thirdly, regarding the value and use of a system of philosophy, I must tell you, that it depends entirely upon the importance of the subject-matter. Some people talk of a philosophy of cooking. In reference to this, a learned author has said, that the Greeks brought philosophy down from Heaven and that some people have degraded it by introducing it into their kitchens. Thus, it is clear that the philosophy of any thing will be as important as its subject-matter is. It appears therefore, that the system of philosophy, which treats about supernatural things, must necessarily convey with it supernatural grandeur, and so possess an all-absorbing importance. So much about the necessity and utility of philosophy in general.

Now, gentlemen, I should state that in reading, examining, and understanding a system of philosophy, which is excee-

dingly abstract, we must exercise a very great amount of caution. This caution lies in this that when we wish to understand a philosophical subject fully, we are to fix in our mind the clear and distinct ideas of the question stripped of words; and so likewise, in the course of reasoning to take up the author's ideas, neglecting his words and observing how far they are connected or separated from those in question. We should be ever watchful against whatsoever might conceal or misrepresent the subject in hand, and we should throughout the course of discussion keep the precise point steadily in our mind, and suffer not the least alteration in any way. This being true of all philosophy, is emphatically true of the Vedanta philosophy. We find, now-a-days, many publications of books on this subject. Some of them deservedly excite our admiration; while others, our scorn and

disgust. The best advice for our youths, overwhelmed with such a host of Vedantic books, will be to read them with the proper caution spoken of before, and to deal with them according to their respective merits. Once for all, I must tell you that it is interest, bias, ignorance and want of proper impartiality, which are singly or jointly the fruitful causes of misrepresenting a subject with a view to expose or extol it. A fair criticism, as you know, is a rare gift with man.

Now we come to our subject. Gentlemen, I should tell you that the selection of your subject has been very opportune at this time, when much interest is felt *for the subject* owing to something like a revival of Hinduism all over India, to the occasional visit of learned oriental scholars of Europe, and to the admirable publications of such treatises as Professor MaxMuller's Lectures on Vedanta and

Professor Duessen's Metaphysics. Indeed we cannot do without Vedanta in our present state of transition. Thus, gentlemen, you are quite reasonable in selecting your subject. But, at the same time, I am sorry to inform you that you are not very fortunate in selecting the person who is to deal with it. Gentlemen, as you know, I do not pretend to be a specialist in any branch of Sanskrit learning, nor do I possess any very rich store of information about the grand subject of to-day, *viz.* the Vedanta, which, though expounded in many volumes by our greatest learned scholiast, the universally renowned Sankaracharya, and by various other scholars both here and abroad, remains to the understanding of the people at large, extremely obscure and abstruse. However, with all my poor resources, I must try my best to satisfy you, by acting according to your wishes and by trying to elu-

cidate as far as possible the abstract doctrines of the Vedanta. To do this, I believe, will not be a lost labour. By so doing we shall be able to prepare our minds to receive fresh lights on this grand subject, which are every day emitted by the western luminaries of the present day.

### THE VEDANTA.

The word Vedanta literally means the conclusion of the Vedas. In its most extended sense, it is the end or scope of the Vedas and so it may be taken in the sense of the final portion, or the final object of the Vedas. Veda, as is generally known, means, etymologically, only knowledge, but with us it has come to mean our Holy Scriptures. The word Vedanta is sometimes used as synonymous with the Upanishads. I should mention here that, what we call Sruti is divided into two

parts (1) Sanhitas, or metrical hymns, and (2) Brahmanas, or expositions of those hymns for ritualistic purposes. The Sutas are aphorisms. The Aranyakas or Upanishads are treatises meant for the ascetics or dwellers in the forest, and are only appendices to the Brahmanas, *i.e.*, the second division of Sruti. At present we read the Vedanta in two forms : (1) in its unsystematic form in the Upanishads, and (2) in its systematic form in the Vedanta Sutas of Vadarayan, *alias* Vyas, with the Sankarabhasya annexed to them. The Vedanta in these forms, unlike other systems of philosophy, is both a philosophy and a religion. This is the unique feature of this Indian Philosophy. When in other countries philosophy and religion are opposed to each other, and religious men and philosophers are constantly straining their powers, without success, to embrace one another as friends in their



professed opinions, we in India are happy to find that our philosophy is the natural outcome of our religion and that our religion is an amiable companion of our philosophy. This is as it ought to be. For, as is known to you, the aim of religion, as well as of philosophy, is nothing but the knowledge of truth, and necessarily the one ought to be an agreeable colleague of the other, and not a formidable foe to destroy or damage the other. However it may sound in the ears of other people, our philosophy is the supporter of our religion, and we are proud of its being so. It is our business to-day to deal with the philosophical part of the Vedanta, which is styled the Adwaitavada, *i.e.*, the theory of universal unity or abstract identity of the soul with Brahman. It is also called Uttaramimansa, *i. e.*, the final inquiry or the inquiry of Brahman, the highest self, in contradistinction to Purvamimansa, *i.e.*,

preliminary inquiry, or the inquiry of religious formalism or merit arising from carrying out Vedic injunctions. Thus it forms the part of Vedic Jnankanda, or spiritual knowledge, and is distinguished from its counterpart, the Karmakanda, *i. e.*, the part dealing with Vedic ritualism. The Vedanta is one of the six Darsanas, *i. e.*, schools of philosophical thoughts known to the Hindus. It is the most important of them, on account of the vast erudition displayed by the different authors and commentators on this subject, on account of the depth of thought and sublimity of ideas we meet with here and there in Vedantic works, and on account of its own merit. There are different sects of this Vedantic system. They arose out of the different ways in which different philosophers interpreted the Sutras of Vadarayana, which acquired an independent authority for themselves. Thus there



were (1) the Sudhadwaita or Kaivalya-dwaita, or abstract monism of Sankaracharya (2) the Visistadwaita, or modified monism of Ramanuja and (3) the Visuddhadwaita, or purified monism of Ballabha. Madhu also founded another system. Ramanuja, Ballabha and Madhu have also many followers. But principally the Vedanta is divided into two schools, namely that of Sankara, and that of Ramanuja. It is beyond our powers, owing to the absence of any historical records, to know exactly which of these two schools of Vedantism represented the more ancient or the more modern system of the Vedanta, if there was any. But we know that men naturally cannot give an unanimous assent to all the particular points of any system of philosophy, especially when it is highly abstract and complicated. This very probably, was the case with the Vedanta. Except in its essential principles,

teachers explained the Sutras and the Upanishads on particular points in their own ways. Thus there arose two sects principally, side by side, each looking to the Sruti as its guide. It appears that Sankara and Ramanuja respectively represented the two opposed sects. The Bhagavatas whom Ramanuja represented were prior to Sankara, who also appealed to many very ancient teachers. Ramanuja came after Sankara. But there is no reason to suppose that either of them represented any system of the Vedanta, which was comparatively more ancient. It should be noted here that the extreme elasticity of the Vedic language afforded ample room for both the systems to appeal to the Vedas as their authority.

But the system of Vedantism which is widely known to the world at present is the system of Sankara, and this system was, once for all, developed in its full

maturity in the hands of the celebrated scholiast, Sankara himself. This system represents the orthodox side of the Brahminic theology and, apart from theological and philosophical considerations, it is the most important and most interesting philosophy that has arisen in India.

The aim of this philosophy is to dispel that Avidya or Nescience, *i. e.*, the phenomenal knowledge, which lies inherent in us as individual beings, and to replace it by Vidya, or true knowledge. About this Avidya or Nescience we shall speak afterwards.

A few more words as to the origin of the Vedanta. We have already said that the Vedanta is based on the Upanishads, or Aranyaka portions of the Brahmanas of the Vedas. Hence it is called Oupani-shadi Vidya, or knowledge founded upon the Upanishads. In fact the two are sometimes identified. Now Upanishad

etymologically means, according to Professor Max-Muller, sitting near a person, *i. e.*, sittings or gatherings where the old sages imparted spiritual knowledge to their pupils. This is, I believe, the most probable meaning. However, there is another interpretation of it. According to this, it is derived from the root *sad* to destroy, and it means that body of teaching, which destroys the Nescience or world-phenomena, and reveals the absolute. These Upanishads are written in the form of dialogues, and they are two hundred and thirty-five in number, of which thirteen are very important. These are all founded, as has been said, on the Vedas. So, ultimately, we see that the origin of the Vedanta is the Veda. But though we see that the Vedanta Philosophy is founded on the Vedic Upanishads, and though it is controlled by them in its method of inquiry, that is to say,

though Advaitism is a philosophical religion directly deduced from the Upanishads, and not from independent observation and analysis alone, as other systems of philosophy are, we are not to understand that it stands entirely severed from reason, experience, observation and common sense. For it emphatically and clearly declares that Sruti or revelation, not supported by reason and not corroborated by experience and common sense, is not valid, and is not conducive to right knowledge. So we see that the Vedanta Philosophy is a combination of reason and revelation.

Before we enter into the subject, it is our duty to explain the meanings of the three terms, on the understanding of which depends the understanding of this philosophy. These are (1) Paramarthika, or the true, (2) Vyavaharika, or the practical, and (3) Pratibhasika, or the appa-

rent. The first Paramarthika means the really true. Such a state is called the Nirguna state, which is the most abstract state, and as such it is highly philosophical, containing metaphysical truth, and is therefore meant only for such persons who are thoughtful and learned. I need hardly tell you that Brahman, the highest self, is the only representative of this state. The Paramarthika knowledge, or knowledge per se, *i. e.* the most philosophical knowledge, which was only meant for the few, is by some scholars, called esoteric, in contradistinction to the theological knowledge meant for the many, which is termed exoteric. But, truly speaking, there was no esoteric Vedanta in the sense of its being shut up from the public at large. In fact it was open to all who were deserving students, irrespective of caste. The second state, *i. e.*, the Vyavaharika, or the practi-



cal state, includes all phenomena, and thus it includes Iswara or creator, individual souls and the whole world. So Vyavaharika knowledge only means phenomenal knowledge and not knowledge *per se*. The world including our body, is known to us only phenomenally. Hence the whole world represents the second state, that is, the Vyavaharika, or the conventional state. The third is Prativasika or the apparent state. This includes such phenomena as a mirage, or a serpent imagined in a rope. These are the results of some defect in us, in addition to our naturally limited powers of knowledge.

Before giving a full analysis of the Vedanta Philosophy in detail, I may be allowed to lay before you a brief outline of it, giving the principal divisions and departments of this philosophy, in order to enable the beginners to grasp it fully afterwards. We shall confine ourselves

chiefly to Sankara's system, which is considered the most important of all Vedantic systems, on account of the sublimity of its thoughts and subtlety of its arguments.

(1) *The doctrine of Brahman*—the highest self, which is the only truth, there being no other truth existing along with it. This, I may remind you, is the only Paramarthika state, that is to say the only really true entity with us. Gentlemen, you are requested to notice the expressions *really true*, *practically true*, and *apparently true*, which we shall have occasion to use very often.

(2) *The doctrine of the world*. Here it is said that आब्रह्मस्तम्भपर्यन्तम् *i. e.*, this world, from a tuft of grass to the Creator, is the outcome of Maya or Avidya, *i. e.*, Nescience, which comes in contact with Brahman, or the highest self, which is the only all-comprehensive



truth. It will be worth noticing here, that Brahman in the neuter means the highest self; whereas its masculine form, Brahma, means the Creator who is only a manifestation of the highest self. The world is not really and absolutely true but is only practically true. The whole amounts to this that this practically true world was created, as it were, only practically by the Creator, who is also true only practically. In reality, there is no world, no creation, and no Creator. The Avidya or Maya, coming in contact with Brahman, becomes the centre of creation, or the origin of this world. This Avidya, or Nescience, consists of three qualities, सत्त्व *i. e.*, goodness or passivity, रजः *i. e.*, passion or activity and तमः *i. e.*, darkness or grossness. Out of these, the five subtle elements, with their respective characteristics, are evolved. From these again the subtle bodies

and the gross elements, and, gradually, all the world-phenomena, are developed. All those world-phenomena are without beginning or end. It is evolved, so to speak, from Brahman, and is re-absorbed into it, according to the theory of Karman and Sansara, which we shall speak about further on in detail.

(3) *The doctrine of the soul.* This doctrine teaches that the individual soul is not different from Brahman the highest self. The plurality of souls is not really or absolutely true, but is only practically or phenomenally true. It is an illusion as it were. The ever changeable Upadhis, *i. e.*, the whole psychological apparatus with *merits* and *demerits*, *i. e.*, the fruits of our actions accompany the soul in its cycle of migration from birth to birth, without sullyng or affecting the pure nature of the soul, which is no other than Brahman. This is the great doc-

trine of Metempsychosis or the Transmigration of the Soul.

(4) *The doctrine of the future state after death.* According to this doctrine, there are four states or ways. (1) Pitriyana, *i.e.*, the path of the manes, which is meant for the performers of good deeds. (2) Devayana, *i. e.*, the divine way which is meant for worshippers of the qualified Brahman, *i. e.*, Iswara, and not the absolute Brahman. (3) The third way is for the wicked and sinful. (4) Salvation, which is not a way but rather a state. A true Vedantist, realising the unreality of the world, understanding the unity of souls, and acquiring the true knowledge of Atma or Soul, obtains final deliverance.

A brief summary of the Vedanta, as expounded by Sankara, will not be out of place here. It is this :—Whatever is, is in reality one. There truly exists only one

universal Being, called Brahman, or Paramatman,—the highest self. It is pure being, *i. e.*, pure intelligence or thought. Brahman is not a thinking being, but thought itself. It is absolutely destitute of qualities. This Brahman is associated with a certain power called Avidya, or Nescience, to which the whole world is due for its very existence. It is, as it were, a principle of illusion. Being associated with this principle, Brahman projects the appearance of the world in the same way as a magician produces illusory appearances of things. Brahman, in so far as it is associated with Maya, may be called the material cause of the world. Brahman in this view is called Iswara, the ruler of the universe. Maya, under the guidance of this Iswara, modifies itself by progressive evolution into all the individual existences, distinguished by special names and forms.



of which the world consists. In all those apparently individual forms of existence, the one invisible Brahman is present, but on account of Maya it appears to be broken up into a multitude of intellectual or sentient principles, the Jivas or individual souls. The whole aggregate of physical organs and mental functions, which separate one Jiva from another, is the offspring of Maya, and as such, is not really true.

The non-enlightened soul cannot look through and beyond Maya, which, like a veil, hides from it its true nature. It blindly identifies itself with its bodily organism, and burdens itself with merits and demerits, which are the causes of its birth or rebirth, while Iswara allots to each soul the form of embodiment to which it is entitled by its previous actions. At the end of each of the great world-periods or kalpas, Iswara draws



back the whole world, into himself which is then dissolved into non-distinct *Maya*, while the individual souls remain in a condition resembling deep slumber which is the nature of undeveloped *Maya*. After some time *Iswara* sends forth a new material world, and the old round of birth, and action and death begin anew and continues to all eternity. The means of escaping from this endless *Sansara* can never be found by observing the Vedic injunctions, which only lead men to temporary good fortune. The final deliverance is possible only by knowing the higher truth. The knowledge of non-duality of Brahman and the individual soul, as taught by the great saying, "That art thou," enables a man to find an escape from this miserable cycle of migration.

Before we come to the details of this system of Sankara, it will be proper

to compare it with that of Ramanuja.

Both systems teach Adwaita, *i. e.*, nonduality or monism. Sankara's nonduality is pure and rigorous *i. e.*, absolute unity, whereas Ramanuja's Adwaita is a qualified non-duality, *i. e.*, nonduality with a difference. Therefore it is called Visistadwaita. According to Sankara, all plurality and difference must be illusory, whereas, according to Ramanuja, Brahman contains within itself elements of difference and plurality owing to which it truly manifests itself in a diversified world. The Brahman of Sankara is in itself impersonal, and is a homogeneous mass of objectless thought transcending all attributes. It becomes a personal God as Iswara only when associated with Maya. Ramanuja's Brahman, on the other hand, is essentially a personal God, the all-powerful and all-wise ruler of a real world permeated and

animated by his spirit. Sankara's individual soul is Brahman in so far as limited by the unreal Upadhis (names and forms) due to Maya. The individual soul of Ramanuja, on the other hand, is really individual. The release from the cycle of migration of the soul means, according to Sankara, the absolute merging of the individual soul, due to the dismissal of Nescience or Avidya. According to Ramanuja, it means the soul's passing from the troubles of earthly life into a kind of heaven. According to him, there is no distinction between a higher knowledge and a lower knowledge, since he does not distinguish between a higher and lower Brahman.

Gentlemen, it will not be our business to discuss the merits of Ramanuja's system as we are only concerned with that of Sankara.

As we are now in a position to exa-



mine minutely the principal doctrines of Sankara's system, it will be useful to place before us, for occasional reference, a very short synopsis of the progressive ideas in science and philosophy of Europe of the present day.

Natural science divides the whole world into organic and inorganic forms of bodies. *Linnaeus*, in the beginning of the 18th century, arranged all organic forms into species, genera, orders, and classes. His idea was that, though individuals might be developments of one primary form, the species, the genera, or the orders, must be distinct creations, and that the one cannot be developed from the other. This view was supported by Cuvier, who by his additional experience in zoology, maintained that there were fresh creations after long geological periods. This theory of special acts of creation is called the teleological, or

dualistic, theory of the universe. This theory has received its death-blow from the more modern monistic theory of development. Lamarck was the first enunciator of this theory of descent or development by inheritance and adaptation. This was afterwards satisfactorily demonstrated by Darwin and Wallace. This scientific theory of the present day holds that all organic forms are deducible from one primary form. In the same way Kant propounded his theory of resolving all inorganic forms into one primary mass. This is the celebrated gas theory. This theory conjectures that the whole inorganic world was at first in a gaseous state, from which various forms were gradually developed. Sir Charles Lyell refuted the theory of periodic creations propounded by Cuvier by showing that the formation of the solid crust of the globe was one of continued development.

Having thus established the theory of development in the inorganic and organic departments of nature, science maintains that sensation, willing, thinking, &c., in the human mind are mere developments from lower forms. It also holds out the hope of connecting the organic with the inorganic development. Some theories are even proposed of which the well-known carbon theory is one. Thus it will be seen that science proposes to explain the origin of the world purely mechanically, resolving all phenomena into one primordial matter, with its capabilities such as force, &c.

Here science stops. This is scientific monism. Then comes the latest philosophy, and boldly asserts that we cannot know anything about matter *per se i. e.*, the eternal world in itself. The perception of the material world arises through our understanding projecting its affections.

(nerve irritations, sensations, &c.,) by means of causality in space and time. In other words the external world is nothing but a representation of the individual intellect, by its own innate forms. That is to say the affections of the intellect are only projected in space and time and appear to be governed by the law of causality. To make this more clear, our sensations and nerve irritations (which are our only guide in knowing both the mediate and immediate objects, *i. e.*, the sensations and the external world) are stretched out as it were by our intellect in space and time and they appear to follow one another as cause and effect. Thus bodies are nothing more than affections that is, forces, represented as filling space. Material objects may therefore be called force-filled spaces. Taking away, then, affection or force from the so called external world, we see that only space remains, which is only a form

of our intellect and does not belong to the external world. So beyond the form, in which the external world appears, we cannot know anything of the external world in itself. Thus matter is only the objective reflux of our understanding, and has only a phenomenal or formal existence with us. In other words, owing to the peculiar constitution of our intellect we cannot know the external world in itself. It is for this reason that the Vedanta says that Avidya or Nescience prevents us from knowing the external world in itself.

Now with the internal world the case is otherwise. Here I cannot doubt my existence. *Cogito ergo sum*. In a certain movement of the limbs, if I can eliminate the two parts, (1) the gesture, which, regarded from without, is but a part of the external world, appearing in space and time, governed by causality, and (2), the volition, which is without space, but is



with time sometimes governed by causality, we will then come to see the third part viz., the Will itself. This lies neither in time nor in space nor in causality. This we can know. This is the vital force, or Soul. This force, or Will is present in the voluntary and involuntary actions of our body equally. It is in itself unconscious. This is the only thing which we can know in itself. This Will is present everywhere throughout the universe.

Let us now revert to our position in science, *i. e.*, to the conclusion which scientific men have arrived at. They say that the whole universe is reducible to one primordial matter with forces &c., not considered as separate. We learn from the foregoing philosophical statements, that matter is nothing but a representation of the individual intellect. It is formal or phenominal. Hence, subtracting this phenominal, (in Vedantic



language, illusory), from the primordial matter, we get only forces &c., in all of which, our learned philosopher says, there is the great central principle of existence, namely the *Will*. In the same manner the modern philosophy of Europe, as taught by the learned Germans, reduces the whole world into *Will*.

According to the Vedanta this *Will* is Brahman. The world, being formal only, is the product of Nescience or Avidya.

Now let us try to understand the principal Vedanta doctrines more clearly and minutely.

1. We take up the doctrine of Avidya, or Maya, or Nescience. In the opening of this part of our Lecture, let me speak a few words about the use of the two terms सत् (*sat*), and असत् (*asat*), as used in the Vedic literature. It is well-known that the Sanskrit language is extremely elastic, and that this elasticity is further in-

creased by the different stand-points from which we look upon an object. This very circumstance has been a puzzle to many, and was the fruitful cause of sectarianisms even in India itself. The same word could be interpreted in different ways and, herein lay the danger. To avoid this error, very great caution was necessary. The consistency of the doctrine, and the reasonableness of the interpretation are generally held to be the safest guides in such difficulties. Now let us see what *sat* literally means. It is derived from the root अस् (*as*), to be. Thus what exists can only literally be called *sat*. *Asat* is formed by adding a negative अ to *sat*. This antonym of *sat* literally means non-existing. According to the Vedanta, I may remind you, there are three states, namely परमार्थिक, or the absolute existence, such as Brahman only ; व्यवहारिक, or the practical existence, such as the world ; and

the प्रातिभासिक, or the apparent existence, such as the mistaken notion of a serpent in a rope. Thus Brahman is absolutely सत् (*sat*), but practically and apparently it is असत् (*asat*). Hence we have in the Vedas, while speaking of Brahman सदेवसौम्यइदमग्रे आसीत् *i.e.*, it was *sat* in the beginning and again असदेवसौम्यइदमग्रे आसीत् *i.e.*, it was a nonentity, as it were, at first. Thus we can call anything सत् (*sat*) and असत् (*asat*), at the same time, looking upon it in perfectly different lights. In the same way we can deny both the two terms सत् (*sat*) and असत् (*asat*), of a thing when we think of it from different stand-points by the two terms. Thus we can say Brahman as neither सत् (*sat*) nor असत् (*asat*), because practically or apparently it is not सत् (*sat*) and absolutely it is not असत् (*asat*) *i.e.*, सत् (*sat*); so in Bhagavatgita:—

ज्ञेयं यत्तत् प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वामृतमश्नुते ।

अनादिमत् परम् ब्रह्म न सत्तन्नासदुच्यते ॥

(I shall tell you what is worth knowing and knowing which a man becomes immortal. The absolute Brahman is without beginning. It is called neither *sat* nor *asat*). In this way Maya or Nescience can be called neither *sat* nor *asat i.e.*, Maya is neither absolutely *sat* (true or real) nor is it practically or apparently *asat i.e.*, non-existent.

I may add here, that this mode of writing or arguing is not allowed in modern logic. The *summum genus*, Being and not-Being cannot be predicated of the same thing at the same time, since it divides the whole world into two possible grand divisions. But, gentlemen, this is a mere convention meant only to bring about consistency in writers and thinkers. This, to our great disadvantage, was not practised in the old days. But we are not to be dissappointed for all that. The consistency of the idea and the soundness of the

argument can always lead us to the right path.

The doctrine of Maya or Nescience plays the most important part in the Vedanta. But unfortunately it has been the least understood, and the most misrepresented. Sir G. Haughton says that "such a system (meaning the Vedanta system) cannot be represented by language, but must be inferred by the mind from the principles." Thus, gentlemen, a little patience and attention are necessary to comprehend this system of the Vedanta. Sankara says that subject and object, *i. e.*, the knower and the known, the ego and the non-ego, fall under the names *we* and *you*. These two, *i. e.*, the subject and the object, are not only different but are diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive. We can never think that *we* are *you* or *you* are *we*. The *you*, *i. e.*, the non-ego may be heard and seen and touched, but the *we* or

*I*, that is, the knower, can never be seen, heard, or touched. What we know of *us* or of *others* is our or their body with its various environments, and not our or their soul, the nature of which is its knowing and not its being known. Therefore the subject can never be the object, neither the object the subject. So it is altogether wrong to transfer the one to the other. Nevertheless, in our every day life, we combine the true and the false together, and say that *I am this* and *this is mine*. Thus we say that *I am weak* and *this book is mine*. This habit is caused by a false apprehension of subjects and objects which are absolutely different, and by not discriminating between the two from each other. In so doing we only transfer the essence and the qualities of the subject to the object, and those of the object to the subject. The subject can only be ourself, and the object is



the whole external world, including our body with its organs. Just as in mistaking mother-of-pearl for silver, a man transfers the essence and qualities of silver to mother-of-pearl, so we imagine that the living individual being is the self. This is technically called **अध्यास** or **अध्यारोप** *i. e.*, taking a thing for what it is not. It is in this way that a man says that he is miserable because of the suffering of his child or wife. All this is therefore the result of our wrongly transferring the essence and qualities of the subject to the object, *i. e.*, of the ego to the non-ego. This wrong or mistaken transferring, or assumption, *i. e.*, this incorrect imputation is the out-come of Nescience or Avidya. The aim of the Vedanta philosophy is, as has been said, to drive off this mistaken transference by right knowledge, *i. e.*, by knowing that the self can only be the knower and not the known. We can know

the self by being the knower only. That is to say we can know nothing beyond the fact that it is. As the sun is said to shine by its own light, so the self knows by its being the knower only. In other words the self is only a self-luminous being, and it is not the body with its environments. Thus, we can describe the effects of Nescience, or Avidya, which consist of false or wrong transferring, &c., as described above. But this way to grasp the idea of Nescience is somewhat too learned. Let me therefore proceed in an easier way. Let us see how the doctrine originated in this system of philosophy. Suppose (1) that God omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, exists, and (2) that He alone exists and nothing else. Being omnipotent He can create a world; and this He does. But when we are guided by the axiomatic principle that something cannot come out of nothing, we must understand by God's

creation, that He creates out of something which previously existed, and this something must have existed in God himself, because nothing else at the time of creation existed. Now the world is an aggregate of souls and of other objects, which are the causes of different modes of intelligence with regard to the souls. God being omniscient and omnipresent, His omniscience is present everywhere. But the individual souls are limited intelligences. Now the question arises, whence does our limited intelligence come, for which there can be no room? The souls springing up from God should have been omniscient like God, since the qualities of the cause must go to make those of the effect. Where is the room, then of our limited intelligence? We are aware of the fact that we are limited intelligences, and that we do not know ourselves to be God. This we cannot doubt. We know that

we are ignorant. If we admit that we are ignorant, our ignorance is established, and if we do not admit that we are ignorant, our ignorance is equally established, because we know that we are not God, *i. e.*, not omniscient, in other words, that we are ignorant. Now holding that the soul is God, and knowing that it does not spontaneously recognise itself as God, we are forced to the conclusion that we are thus ignorant because we are ignorant, that is to say, we do not know ourselves to be God on account of our ignorance. In other words, it is owing to our being obstructed by ignorance, or *Ajnana*, that we do not know ourselves to be God. Now this soul, with its various modes of intelligence, *viz.*, the various representations of its intellect, *i. e.*, the whole world, is ignorant of its being God. Had there been no ignorance, there would have been no individual soul with its diffe-

rent modes of intelligence, no world, but God. Thus we see that the world owes its existence solely to ignorance. This ignorance then, makes the world. This is then the creative principle. Thus it is the Prakriti or the energy, or the power of the omnipotent God. That is God *plus* ignorance or power, creates the world. So this ignorance is called Sakti, or power. Thus far we have the pure Vedanta. Pushing the question further, we can see the question in another light. The world exists owing to our ignorance. Had there been no ignorance there would have been no world. Its reality then is not true reality. It is a myth, an illusion, a phantasmagoria, a deceit, or a jugglery. Thus gentlemen, we see that Maya, coming from the root *Ma*, to measure, originally meant only power or energy, and was afterwards deteriorated in its meaning when applied in the sense of illusion, &c., being looked

upon from a theological point of view. But this latter is not the meaning in the Vedanta. The world of the Vedantist is as real as his individual existence is real. It is not an illusion in the strict sense of the term. The mirage is an illusion, and the external world is real in relation to it. The world is unreal only in relation to the absolute reality, *i.e.*, Brahman. The world is really an illusion with the Buddhists and not with the Vedantists. The ignorance mentioned above is not so much as individual ignorance but the ignorance, inherent in human nature. It is due to our limited nature. Professor Max Muller says that "it is something like a general cosmical force, as darkness inevitable in the light, which causes the phenomenal world to seem and to be to us, what it seems and what it is." Mythologically Maya is represented as a goddess creating the world. Colloquially it is used in the sense



of affection, interest, or any worldly tie. So we can at once see how gradually the original meaning of Maya has been deteriorated in different ways and has come to signify what is only remotely or analogically connected with the main idea.

The Vedanta holds that behind what is only relatively real there is the absolute—the full reality of Brahman. Now a few words more on the origin of the idea of Maya. To understand how this limitation in our knowledge is the cause of the world, let us quote the words of Fichte. He says “that the ego is absolute and posits itself: it is a pure activity. As its activity, however, has certain indefinable limits, when it experiences this limitation of its activity, it also posits a non-ego, and so organises the objective world. The ego cannot therefore posit itself without at the same time

projecting a non-ego, which, consequently, is, in so far the mere creation of the ego." Very similarly the Vedantist says that the soul is absolute as it is God or Brahman and does not require some other agency to originate it, that it posits itself, *i.e.*, it lays down the position "here I am" and that in so doing it meets with a limitation. This limitation of knowledge, but for which the soul would have been omniscient God, is styled ignorance. The objectified limitation, *i. e.*, the imitation viewed as something external, which with Fichte is non-ego or the external world, is, according to the Vedanta, objectified ignorance, or ignorance regarded as something external, that is to say, the world of the Vedantist is objectified ignorance. Thus the world has its origin in ignorance, or in the limited nature of our intelligence viewed objectively, *i.e.*, as something external. This ignorance

may be spoken of as गुण (*guna*), or fetter of the soul, or the trammels of the soul, and viewed subjectively, *i. e.*, as something remaining in the soul, it is only अज्ञान (*ajnana*), or ignorance. Thus गुण (*guna*), fetter, and अज्ञान (*ajnana*), ignorance are not different, but the same. In the external world, *i. e.*, in the objectified माया (*maya*) or ignorance, we see three qualities more or less present everywhere. These are सत्त्व (*Satwa*), goodness or purity, रजः (*Rajas*) passion or energy, and lastly तमः (*Tamas*) darkness or grossness. So it is त्रिगुण (*Triguna*) or a three fold chord or fetter of the soul. The subjective ignorance which is the cause of the objective, must necessarily consist of these three qualities, since we know that कारणगुणाः कार्यगुणमारभन्ते *i. e.*, the qualities of the effect, proceed from the qualities of the cause. Thus Ajnana or ignorance, consists of these three

qualities (त्रिगुणरमक). This Nescience, or Ajnana, is not like the want of knowledge, or like the want of anything, a negation, or blank, but it is a positive phenomenal existence, *i. e.*, it is भावरूपम्. It is the opponent of knowledge, and so it is the obstruction to our true knowledge, *i. e.*, it is the cause of the limitation of our intelligence, and hence it is ज्ञानविरोधि. It cannot be called real, *i. e.*, it is not absolutely real, as it ceases to exist when we attain to the true knowledge. Neither can it be called unreal like illusion, because it has a practical reality and a phenomenal existence as real as our own individual existence. So it is called सदसदभ्यामनिर्वचनीयम्. Gentlemen, these relative words, real and unreal, are puzzling to many, and we need to be cautious in rightly understanding them. Nescience is not absolutely real, like Brahman, but is practically real as our individual souls are real. Thus we cannot call it real or

unreal. We see that the two other relative terms such as नित्य, eternal, and अनित्य, or non-eternal, or temporary, are often confounded in the same way. These terms refer to time, which is related to the creation of the world. Maya or Nescience is नित्य, i.e., exists eternally with the creation or evolution of the world, since the idea of creation is ever present, with that of the world. "Creator" and "created" are allied terms and the ideas conveyed by each of them are eternally connected. Now the creation existing eternally, the Nescience, which is the cause of the creation, must necessarily exist eternally. How the creation is eternally existing we shall presently come to see. This Nescience again is not नित्य, or eternal, in the sense in which Brahman is नित्य, or eternal, because we can think of the idea of the absolute eternal reality apart from the idea of creation. In other words the idea of crea-



tion can be eliminated from the idea of the universe, and the residue would be eternal and absolute Brahman, and then only this Nescience may be spoken of as अनित्य, or non-eternal, but actually it is not so. Practically this Nescience is नित्य, or, eternally existing with the creator. Moreover, it being something like a power, or, शक्ति, in Brahman, must necessarily be नित्य, or eternal, as Brahman is eternal. Thus it is only the different aspects of the question which are puzzling to many. Having explained thus the origin of the idea of Maya or Nescience, let us try to understand the reasonableness of this doctrine. That our knowledge is limited and relative, i. e., conditioned by our organs and intellect, is admitted by almost all the best thinkers of the day. All that we perceive is only phenomenal, and reality lies behind it. Of course, there are minds perfectly satisfied with things as they appear



and are unable to understand anything except what is visible and tangible. They would hardly be convinced of any invisible or eternal existence, much less would they believe that what is visible is only unreal or phenomenal, and therefore changeable, perishable and non-eternal. Philosophy has very little concern with unphilosophical turns of mind conversant only with the *bredd and butter* sciences of the world. Thoughtful men try to dive deep, and are able to perceive that men know directly or immediately the sensations or affections of their organs, and only mediate or phenomenally the whole external world. The "elephant and the blind men" maxim, called *अन्वहस्तिन्याय* illustrates clearly how the knowledge of men is only relative or conditional. It means that a number of blind men being instructed to know the elephant, touched the different parts of the body of the animal and came to

the conclusion that each part with a certain shape was the elephant. So their ideas of the elephant differed according to the different parts of the animal's body they touched. Just so is our knowledge of the external world, which is only represented by our intellect. Professor Deussen emphatically says, that the whole word is nothing more than *my* representation, *i. e.*, it is only the form in which things appear to *me*. In other words, things in themselves are beyond our cognisance, and what we perceive externally is only phenomenal. Dr. Johnson, when he kicked the ground, and exclaimed, in a fit of passion that "that was his external world," meant only the sensation of kicking the ground, and not the ground itself. Thus whatever we know, we know through the sensations, and thus we see that everything is phenomenal. This phenomenal, or illusive nature of the world is only meant

in the following sloka.—

इतो न किञ्चित् परतो न किञ्चित्  
 यतो यतो याति ततो न किञ्चित् ।  
 स्वात्मावबोधपरं न किञ्चित्  
 विचार्य मानेऽपि जगन्न किञ्चित् ॥

It means that :—"Nothing is real here, and nothing beyond ; wherever a man goes nothing is real there too ; nothing there is besides the knowledge of the self and the world even appears to be nothing, when examined well." But this phenomenal world is not a mere illusive phantom of the senses. This is real as we are real. This is the Vedantic view. Colebrooke also held this view, though he has been very strongly criticised by superficial thinkers. The misrepresentation of this reasonable idea of Nescience is partly due to viewing the question, sometimes philosophically, and sometimes mythologically. This I have explained already. Now this Maya or Nescience may be viewed in the aggregate as अज्ञान

(ajnana) or the collective Nescience of the whole universe. Thus it remains as the body of creation. When viewed distributively, it is used in the plural form माया (maya), and then it means the individual ignorance only. So in this view, matter or external world becomes a complete phenomenon. It is a thing of which we know nothing in itself. It is therefore indescribable. It passes into many shapes, which are only cognisable, and form the circle of the knowable, which comprises all our sciences. Now about Nescience, we come to understand that it is not a negation, and not a blank, but a positive entity, of which we can know nothing. Its existence in some form or other cannot be illusive. This whole Maya is nothing but name and form. We are not justified in raising the question, "what is the cause of this Nescience," as all our ideas of causality fall within the circle of Nescience, and



so to find the cause of it would be like mounting upon one's own shoulders.

Instead of going into the details, we proceed to the other doctrine of the Vedanta. It is the doctrine of Metempsychosis, or Transmigration of the Soul. As the doctrine of Karman or, action, or act is closely connected with it, we will handle them both together. Transmigration of the Soul means a re-birth of it after death, and a pre-existence of it before the present life. Here the question arises: How do we come to know this to be the case? Gentlemen, it is known to you that the Vedanta starts with the principle that Brahman alone is the true reality, and everything else is only due to Maya or Nescience. The plurality of Souls is not the true reality. There is only one Soul, which is eternal. Our bodies with their organs are the effects of Maya, which is only a certain name and form. So death, i.e., the

destruction of the body, is not the destruction of the Soul. It is the destruction of its name and form only. So far we understand. Now comes the doctrine of Karman, to enlighten us about the future state of the Soul after death. Knowing the present, we infer the future and the past. We know that the world is full of miseries. Some suffer, while others are happy. The Vedantist boldly gives an explanation of this state of affairs in the world. He says that the cause of this inequality cannot possibly or reasonably be found in the caprice or injustice of the Creator. It is rather the result of actions performed in a previous life. By Karman is not meant the individual action only, but it is the combined action of the whole human race, as all actions of men are always directly or remotely related and connected with one another. Actions as causes, cannot go for nothing. They must produce



effects. These actions are eternal as the world is eternal. As the actions of a previous life have received fruition in this life, so the actions of this life will lead us to another, and so on. This satisfactorily explains the question of heredity and the perpetuation of acquired habits. It is for this reason that thoughtful men have so much admired this doctrine of Karman. The Karman is not to be confounded with destiny or fate. It is rather the law of causation or causality. The last link being beyond our reach to know, since the world-phenomenon is without beginning or end, as we shall see, like the tree from the seed and the seed from the tree, this law of Karman is accordingly eternal with creation and so with Brahman itself. This Karman is divided into three classes, (1) the Sanchita, or the accumulated, (2) the Praravdha, or that which is about to develop

and (3) the Kriyamana, or the actions performed in this life. These three classes of actions are linked together as causes and effects. Thus it appears that all our actions are necessitated, as it were, and we have no choice in our actions. If so, the question arises where lies the room for our freedom of will, and where is the chance of salvation ? If our actions are dependant on our previous actions, we can have no choicc in the matter, and are apt to be carried on in the stream of action for ever. The Vedantist proudly comes to explain this intricate question reasonably. He says that his philosophy considers Jiva, or the individual Soul, to be made up of two parts, (1) the Soul which is Brahman, and (2) the body with its environments. As regards his body he is open to this necessity, and is obliged to act under circumstances moulded by his previous actions. But as regards his Soul,

which is Brahman, and therefore knowledge itself, he is free. The actions can influence his body, but they have no effect upon the Soul, which is unchangeable in its very nature. The veil of ignorance about its own nature it can cast off at any moment, if it wills. Here then lies the freedom of will of an individual Soul. The Maya or Nescience is its own making and it can throw it off whenever it likes. This is by the way. Now gentlemen, to our former position about births and re-births of the individual Soul. We have seen that birth and re-birth with the Vedanta are only changes in name and form. Our previous actions, as causes, must produce effects, since causes imply effects, and they cannot but produce effects by their very existence. Similarly our present actions must produce future effects, which necessarily suppose a future life. Now as these actions are causes or effects

in so far as they affect our body only and not the Soul, the eternality of actions implies the eternality of bodies of this individual Soul in the present, past, and future. In fact the theory of causation or Karman and the theory of Metempsychosis go together. When this Soul, by virtue of its freedom of will, comes to realise its own nature which is pure, absolute, characterless, and blissful, the actions cease to exist along with its body, as its individuality is then at an end, and it has no more to appear as Jiva or an individual Soul.

The origin of this doctrine is to be found in all the Vedas. The Rigveda says असृनोते पुनरस्मासु चक्षुः पुनः प्राणमिह नो वेहि भोगम्, &c., (May the Lord give us in our future birth our organs, our vitality, and our articles of enjoyments). So also in the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda, we find many hymns referring to this idea of the



Transmigration of Souls. In spite of all this, I may add, that many careless readers have openly announced that this idea of Transmigration is absent in the Vedas, and that it was only a later graft in the Vedanta Philosophy. In the Satapatha Brahman, Bhrigu, the son of Varuna, is informed of this idea by certain man-eaters who were revenging themselves for wrongs received in their previous life. This doctrine was freely handled by the Buddhists, and was known to the Greeks, to the Egyptians, and to most of the other ancient nations of the world. Its moral effect we shall come to see presently.

Now we come to the *Doctrine of Creation*. In this part of our lecture, I shall not detain you long. Creation, in its ordinary sense, cannot find a place in the Vedanta. We have seen that something cannot come out of nothing. This is the first axiom in the Vedanta, and God with

His omnipotence cannot act against this axiom. In other words, He cannot do that which is impossible. Brahman never creates. Creation only means the act of evolution. Prakriti, the objectified Nescience or ignorance, with its overt or external (विक्षेप), and its covert or internal (आवरण) action, develops in many forms, and evolves in several ways, according to peculiar laws of its own. About the laws and order of development the Vedanta philosophy has very little to do, as any supposition will be equally acceptable to it, provided the main doctrine, *i.e.*, the doctrine of Brahman and Maya, or Nescience, remains unaffected. The second provision would, of course, naturally be the reasonableness of the supposition. The Vedantists are mainly guided by the reasonable idea that bodies have evolved in succession according to the degree of their subtleness or grossness. This main idea



perfectly tallies with scientific principles and is conformable to common sense. Now, gentlemen, this creation cannot but be eternal. Iswara is eternal, and so His activity, which is His nature, must be eternal too. Owing to this eternal activity—Maya or Nescience—which is His eternal body, consisting of names and forms only, receives force, as it were, and goes on developing itself. In the Upanishads, it is said that "He (*i.e.*, Iswara) desired : let me become many, let me pass into plurality." And thus He projected out of Himself all this world.

Here the wish to generate and look about means only the activity of Brahman in the capacity of Iswara or the Creator. This creative thought of Iswara manifested itself in names and forms. Thought and language are inseparable, as every word expresses a concept, and not an individual precept. A tree is not this or that tree,

but the general idea or concept of all trees. So every individual body is the realisation of its idea, or concept. This realisation of the idea, this manifestation of Iswara's thought, is His Maya, His body or Nescience developing in names and forms. Thus speech, or वाक्, is represented in many places of the Upanishads as the creative principle. So Iswara's activity means His thinking, and His thinking implies realisation of His thought, and that ultimately comes as manifestation in different forms and names. Thus, His activity being eternally present, the creation, that is, the manifestation of His thought in names and forms must necessarily be eternally present. When he suspends His activity for a time, or in other words, when He does not think about these ideas, this Nescience, or the world vanishes, its developments disappear, and His thought remains unrealised and

unmanifested in the form of the world. When this state of things happens, it is said that the world is reabsorbed in Him at the time of प्रलय, or universal destruction. Really it means nothing but the suspension of Iswara's thinking. In connection with this, let me quote नासदीय सुक्त of the Rigveda. X. 129 :

नासदासौक्ष्मासोत्तदानौम्

नासौद्रजो नो व्योमापरोयत् ।

किमावरोवः कुहकस्य शर्भ

ब्रम्हः किमासौद्गहनं गभीरम् ॥

न मृत्युरासौदमृतं न तर्हि

न रात्र्या अह्नासीत् प्रकेतः ।

आनीदवातं स्वधया तदेकं

तस्माद्दान्यन्नपरः किञ्चनास ॥

तम आसौत्तमसा गूढमग्रेऽ

प्रकेतं सलिलं सर्व्वमा इदम् ।

तुच्छेऽनाभ्वपिहितं यदासी

त्तपसस्तन्महिना जायकतैम् ॥

(It was not entity which was in the beginning, nor was it non-entity; no air was then, and no sky above. Death was not then, nor immortality. There was no distinction of day or night. That one breathed without afflation, self-determined, other than and beyond it, there was nought. Darkness there was, wrapped in darkness. All this was undifferentenced water, *viz.*, the principle of unreality. That one that was void, as it were covered with nothingness, developed itself by the power of self torture, *i. e.*, coercing itself to a prevision of the world that is to be.) And further.

कामस्तदग्रे समवर्त्तताधिमनसो रेतः

प्रथमं यदासीत् ।

सतोवन्मुमर्सात् निरविन्दन् हृदि

प्रतीत्या कवयोमनीषा ॥

(Desire first rose in it, the primal germ : This sages seeking with the intel-





lect, have found in the heart to be the tie of entity to non-entity.)

The self in its earliest connection with this creative principle becomes Iswara. This principle means coercing itself to a prevision of the world to be, and this prevision is its desire to project the spheres of the world, and to part itself phenomenally into all the innumerable forms that are to pass through them.

Let us now pass on to the *Doctrine of the Individual Soul*. It is said that a man, as well as all the individual bodies of the world, consist of three departments, or bodies, (1) the कारणदेह, or the causal body, (2) the लिङ्गदेह, or the subtle body, and (3) the स्थूलदेह, or the gross body ; and of five envelopes, or vestures, (1) the envelope of bliss (आनन्दमयकोष), (2) the envelope of vitality (प्राणमयकोष), (3) (the envelope of mind (मनोमयकोष), (4) the envelope of intellect ( विज्ञानमयकोष ), and (5) the

gross envelope of the material body, (अन्नमयकोष). These bodies and vestures are very often spoken of in the Vedantic language. Instead of going into details, I may inform you that these bodies and vestures will not mislead us, if we only understand them to mean as follows :—

1. They are not like layers of the earth, arranged one upon the other, but are mixed up together. In the case of the inanimate world, the bodies express the three stages of development, and in the case of an individual living being, they express the three sides of his nature, corresponding to those of the inanimate world. According to the Vedanta, the distinction between organic and inorganic forms is only phenomenal and therefore imaginary, and all beings are only developments from the same manifestations, which are called bodies and envelopes. The vestures are only our different



natures viewed apart from one another, whereas they remain with us, mingled together in one form of existence. The bodies and vestures are all developments from the Nescience, which is the first manifestation. From Iswara down to the lowest form of existence, the Vedantist sees a difference in development only, and the self, the Atma, is one and the same. Now, gentlemen, I should inform you that these details have very little to do with the broad outlines of the Vedanta system as a philosophy, for when the true knowledge is once acquired and the goal of the Vedanta is reached, all individualities vanish, and the world ceases to exist.

Thus the individual Soul is a combination of reality and unreality, or phenomenal--of the constant and the variable--of the Soul which is Brahman, and the body which is the outcome of Ne-

science. It is owing to the presence of this constant part, the Soul which is the source of all activity, that the body can act. So the Soul of a man is not a mere word, but is really the most important part—the centre of all energy of our individual existence. Thus we see that the Soul, or Atma, as individualised in man, is only Brahman, the constant factor everywhere *present*, the highest development of Nescience, or objectified ignorance. In order to understand fully the different positions of the Soul as Brahman, Iswara and the Jiva, &c. I propose giving you a brief analysis of the different grades of development.

Starting from Brahman, we can say that this absolute reality is pure thought. When it thinks about itself it is only thought, as light self-illuminating. Unaccountably this is eternally connected with the principle of Maya, or Nescience,

the creative principle. Why it is so connected no body knows or can know. The question of causality goes only as far as Nescience, and not beyond it. Since causality itself is an outcome of Nescience, to ask the cause of Nescience, would be asking an absurd question altogether. Now when this pure thought is connected with Nescience, it is called by the name of Iswara, the universal ruler. Again the thoughts of this Iswara are multiplied and manifested in various shapes and words. Being present everywhere with them, this Brahman (Iswara) appears in many shapes, as space enclosed in a jar appears as a limited space, and in many such jars as many different spaces, being named as such. But space is really one and not many. Very similarly the different grades of manifestation go to define the individual Souls the प्राज्ञ (Prajna), the

हिरण्यगर्भ (Hiranyagarbha), the तैजस (Taijasa), the वैश्वानर (Vaishwanara), or विराट (Virat), and the विश्व (Vishwa). But Brahman is the same and not many.

Starting from the individual Soul, I see that I know that I exist separately from the external world, or, in the language of Descartes, I think, therefore I exist. This phenomenal world is with me only an ideal representation, which being eliminated, I remain I, and am one with the true principle of existence, *i.e.*, Brahman. The active thoughts of Iswara, the Prajna, &c., are only the objectified causes of the external world, and they vanish with the evanescence of the idea of the external world. I think of Benares for instance. Along with this thought comes in the idea of its people. If I cease to think of the city, the idea of its people will also cease to be present with me. In the same way the thinking activity



of the Soul, directed towards Nescience, or objectification, brings in the idea of the world and vanishing, destroys it. The different grades of development of Nescience being successively eliminated, the individual Jiva, gradually takes the position of वैश्वानर Vaiswanara &c., to the last of Iswara. Here, subtracting the idea of Nescience altogether, we reach the absolute principle of existence, Brahman the highest Soul.

We now come to the *Doctrine of Moksha*, or salvation according to the Vedanta. The word Moksha literally means release, and hence release from bondage. Properly speaking, it is not a positive bliss, but rather a want of evil. It is a complete cessation of individualised existence, and the act of merging into the very fontal essence, the very principle of existence and truth. It is the unification of the individual Soul with the

highest Soul. It is rising above the world and its phenomenal surroundings. It is the casting off of our Nescience, which is the origin of all evils. Thus Moksha, or salvation, is the realisation of the truth that "I am Brahman." Our Soul therefore as Brahman, is ever pure, and its nature is never affected by Nescience, and thus Moksha in regard to the Soul itself is meaningless. In the Soul itself there can be no bondage and release therefore is meaningless. But, owing to its contact with Nescience, it only forgets itself and considers it different from itself. Moksha is therefore the revival of the lost memory, that is, it is the correction of the mistaken notion of individuality. As such it is not a positive gain but is only a restoration of its own nature, which was only fictitiously altered. Sankara says that Moksha is not a thing to be obtained, nor a condition to be produced, but it is



the restoration of the very nature of things, which ignorance prevents us from cognising. The destruction of ignorance is what all teaching, all learning, and all philosophy, has to accomplish. As in the (कण्ठामणि), neck-jewel illustration, one having a jewel suspended on his neck, forgets it, and looks for it here and there, but rests in peace when he is informed of the fact that it was never lost, so the individual Soul, having Brahman within his heart, only loses sight of it but, on being enlightened by true knowledge, realises his unity with Brahman. It is in this knowledge, that there is no evil, no diversity, no limitation, no creation, no bond; nor there is the worker, the aspirant, nor even the released. This is proper *jñāna*. This proper or true knowledge, *viz.*, the knowledge of the one-ness of the Soul, and the highest Soul, is called Para-vidya, *i.e.*, the highest know-

ledge in contradistinction to the other kind of knowledge, which is called *Apara-vidya*, *i. e.*, a low kind of knowledge. To understand this one-ness of Souls, let me draw your attention to what we do in our every day life in identifying two things. Practically we identify two things by leaving out the unessential parts of them. Brahman invisible and Brahman visible, *i. e.*, the individual Souls, are one and the same, because invisibility and visibility, being only modifications of Nescience, are unessential parts of the two *expressions*. This figure of speech in Sanskrit is called *जहल्लक्षणा*. I should remind you here, gentlemen, that this non-duality of the Soul and Brahman is not in accordance with Ramanujah's system. But it cannot be called, reasonably, Sankara's innovation, as I have said before that Sankara very probably

represented other ancient teachers as regards this view. Moreover this probability almost amounts to certainty when we compare the meanings of the four Maha-vakyas, or great sayings, belonging to each of the four Vedas (1) तत्त्वमसि *i. e.*, Thou art it, (2) अयमात्माब्रह्म *i. e.*, this Soul is Brahman, (3) अहं ब्रह्मास्मि *i. e.*, I am Brahman, and (4) प्रज्ञानम् ब्रह्म *i. e.*, the knowledge is Brahman.

But then where is the necessity of this true knowledge? We have seen that the Soul in its eternal journey from body to body is the subject of innumerable miseries—of evils which are the creation of our own minds and of troubles which are inevitable to the cycle of births. We know that all these do not really belong to the Soul, and that it is our thinking which makes them appear so. The popular expression that 'there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so,' has a

full Vedantistic colouring in it. So naturally the idea comes to us that if we stop thinking in that way, nothing will appear to us good or bad. If we can realise our Brahmic nature, no evils, no miseries, and no troubles, will approach us. ब्रह्मविद्ब्रह्मैवभवति, i. e., knowing Brahman makes one Brahman. Know that you are Brahman and you become Brahman. When you reach this true knowledge, no acts will affect you, no sins will touch you, no meritorious deeds will elevate you, and you shall be one with the highest bliss, the eternal peace, the pure thought, and the fontal essence. Now the question comes whether salvation is possible before death, or after death? As you know gentlemen, that freedom of the will implies freedom of action as regards knowledge; if we choose, we may strive after true knowledge and can



acquire it at any moment of our existence here or elsewhere. But the Soul, coming to know that it is one with Brahman, cannot realise its nature, cannot become one with Brahman, without casting off its body and its environments, which are all products of Nescience. Now this body with its organs is the effect of our past actions of a previous life. As such viz., as effects of certain given causes, they must necessarily remain with the Soul for a certain fixed time, after the lapse of which the Soul will merge into its own nature, *i. e.*, the Soul will become one with Brahman. The stock example here is the whirling of the potter's wheel, after his vessel is ready. The wheel will go on moving on account of the force applied to it before, and after some time when the force is exhausted, it ceases to move at all. Very similarly a person's life will conti-



nue as an effect of his previous actions, even after his acquisition of the right knowledge, but it will cease with the end of those causes. The actions of the present life of the enlightened Vedantist will no longer affect him, and will not prolong his journey in the world of phenomena. His world will be the world of truth. His actions of his present life will be reduced to ashes ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्मणि भस्मसात् कुरुतेऽर्जुन. He will leave nothing behind but his name and form and his individuality. When he sees Brahman as the highest and the lowest everywhere, all knots of his heart and all sorrows are split, all doubts vanish and his works become *nil*.

भियते हृदयग्रन्थिच्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।

क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन्दृष्टे परावरे ॥

The man acquiring this knowledge is called जीवन्मुक्त, i. e., released alive. His

actions will be the same as of those who are ignorant, he will be equally guided by the same laws of nature, as his ignorant neighbour, that is to say, he will go on acting as a rational being so long as he will live. But he knows that all his works are illusive as this whole world is, and therefore they do not adhere to him, nor produce for him a new life after his death. Such enlightened Vedantists are thus described :—

(1) आशा नाम नदो मनोरथजला तृष्णातरङ्गाकुला  
रागग्राहवती वितर्कविहगा धैर्यद्रुमध्वंसिनी ।  
मोहावर्त्तसुदुस्तरातिगह्वना प्रोत्तुङ्गचिन्तातटी  
तस्याः पारगता विशुद्धमनसो नन्दन्ति योगीश्वराः ॥

Moreover :—

(2) धैर्यं यस्य पिता क्षमा च जननी शान्तिश्चिरं गेहिनी  
सत्यं सूनुरयं दया च भगिनी भ्राता मनःसंयमः ।

शय्या भूमितलं दिशोऽपि वसनं ज्ञानामृतं भोजन  
मेतेयस्य कुटुम्बिनो वद सखे कस्माद्भयं योगिनः ॥

(The pure-hearted ascetics are the happiest of men, since they have crossed the river of ambition, of which the water is our desire, the furious waves are our anxieties, the dangerous aqueous animals are our different passions, the water-fowls are our doubts, the tree on its banks, liable to be swept away by the current, is our strength of mind, the dangerous whirlpools are our errors and ignorance, and the steep banks are our oppressive thoughts.

Tell me friend, whom need an enlightened ascetic fear, when, as his relatives, he has his patience for his father, his toleration for his mother, his peace for his faithful wife, his truthfulness for his son, his charity for his sister, and his control over his mind for his

brother, and when he has the bare ground for his bed, the different quarters for his clothes and his knowledge—the elixir for his food ?)

The state in salvation is like an everlasting sound and dreamless sleep, in which state there is no evil, no joy, and no idea of the world. The state of our sound sleep differs from the state of salvation, in its being temporary, and in its being accompanied with certain Sanskaras, or inherent inclinations, owing to the presence of which the external world again comes to our cognisance and we are again made to suffer. Whereas in the state of salvation, the blissful state continues for ever, we being merged into our true nature, —the nature of Brahman—the सच्चिदानन्द *i. e.*, the truth, the thought, and the pure joy.

We come now to the Doctrine of Brahman. The word Brahman derivatively



means to grow. Hence what grows or developes in the form of the universe is Brahman. But this idea is connected with that of Brahman's being associated with Maya or Nescience, and owing to which Brahman phenomenally only, and not really, becomes the material cause of the world.

Now the proof of the existence of this highest God *i. e.*, Brahman, according to this philosophy, is revelation or Sruti. But as it has already been said, it is not solely guided by it. Reason also perfectly vindicates the truth of this revelation. This revealed doctrine follows at once from indirect or negative reasoning. For, a Vedantist would say, if not Brahman, what else would account for this seeming world? What would be its origin? What would be its material or efficient cause? The effect being given, what should be its appropriate cause?



Firstly, with regard to the materialistic point of view. If it be possible, let matter be eternal, evolving in the form of the universe. So nothing lies beyond it, and there is no highest self. All the individual selves, along with their cognitive or intellectual apparatus, are but developments of this unintelligent matter, the primordial substance. According to the Sankhya system, it would be Prakriti with the three qualities of सत्त्व (Satwa—goodness) रजः (Rajas—activity) and तमः (Tamas—darkness), which are the characteristics of the Vedantic Nescience. Before giving the Vedantic refutation of this theory, let me sum up Professor Deussen's view against materialism. He says, "so surely as materialism scorns all that is highest and deepest in philosophy and religion, so surely are its results in the sphere of art flat and vulgar, and in that of morality hopeless,

desolate, and perverting". He goes on, "Heavy lies on our heart the burden of a world in which for God, freedom, and immortality, there is no place. The empirical sciences, dealing with matters of fact, overlook one which of all facts is the first and most certain." It is, therefore Professor Deussen thinks, lost labour to endeavour to refute materialism. Now, gentlemen, let us see what Vedanta has to say on this point. In Saririka Sutra the refutation is given thus :—

I.—The Sutra युक्तेः शब्दान्तराच्च means that materialism cannot hold, firstly because it is against revelation, and secondly because it is against reason. This primordial unintelligent matter cannot produce the world which is different in characteristic qualities from that original matter. The fundamental ground of reasoning is that the effect must potentially exist in the cause before

its origination, and is non-different from it. The stock example here is the milk and the curd. The cause, which is the milk is only called the curd when it is viewed as an effect. It is impossible to bring about an effect which is materially different from its cause. The fundamental cause of all appears in the form of this and that effect up to the last effect of all, just as an actor appears in various robes, and so becomes the basis of all notions and terms about him. Therefore materialism being insufficient for our purposes, we hold that Brahman, affected with Maya, and having many divine powers, is the cause of this world.

(3) The Sutra वचनानुपपत्तेर्ज्ञानुमानम् means that a non-intelligent matter, without being guided by an intelligent being, cannot possibly produce effects capable of subserving our purposes. This is the grand argument of design.

(4) The Sutra प्रवृत्तेश्च means that the purely non-intelligent matter cannot be the cause of activity in producing the world. The motive power of intelligence is incontrovertible, that is, motion can be reconciled with the doctrine of an intelligent first cause, and not with a dull non-intelligent one.

(5) The Sutra अभ्युपगमेऽप्यर्थाभावात् means that dull matter cannot be the cause, on account of the absence of any purpose on its part to bring about the creation, whereas it is conceivable in the case of an intelligent first cause.

Thus the Vedanta concludes that materialism is an absurd theory, which is not competent to explain, and account for, the world phenomenon.

II.—The Atomic view of the world is refuted in almost the same fashion as absolute materialism.

III.—Thirdly comes the Buddhistic



Nihilism. It is called the *शून्यवाद* or *असद्वाद*, which means that the world came out of a void, or out of nothing. In other words entity emanates from non-entity. A Vedantist would say that entity cannot come out of non-entity, for, if things can come out of a characterless nothing, or nullity, then the plants, the curds, the pot, and so forth, may come out of such pure nullities as the horns of a hare, &c., because all nullities are in nature the same. Hence this theory is utterly unreasonable.

IV.—Fourthly we come to the Buddhistic *Vijnanavada*, or Sensationalism. According to this theory, there is no external world, and consequently no creator of it is wanted. Every thing is internal, and all that we call external only seems to be so, and is not really external. To this the Vedantist replies that if there be nothing external, how can anything appear external, *i. e.*, be like an external



thing. No one, says "Vishnumitra, looks like the son of a childless mother." If we are to accept the truth as it is given to us in our experience, we must affirm that the thing perceived is presented externally, and not only that it is presented *like* an external thing. In other words the Vedanta will not allow a perfect idealism. In so doing it is not to be considered as inconsistent with itself, as we know that the external things with the Vedanta are as real as the minds that perceive them. Individual Souls, and their environments, are true for the many, they have a practical existence, and they are real from the practical point of view. They are only unreal from the transcendental or metaphysical point of view.

V —Fifthly we come to the Doctrine of Dualism *i. e.*, of the existence of matter and spirit, which is equally unreasonable to a Vedantist. In other words, the idea

that God, the highest Spirit, created matter out of nothing, is absurd with a Vedantist, since the idea goes against his axiomatic principle that something cannot come out of nothing ; and this truth God even with His omnipotence, cannot set at nought.

Thus a Vedantist proudly announces that his doctrine is perfectly acceptable to all people, as it is an out-come of solid reasoning. To an Indian Hindu, it is both revelation and the soundest philosophy.

Thus, gentlemen, we are now in a position to understand Brahman as the material and efficient cause of the universe in a modified form. Let us now learn something about the nature of this highest Soul. This Brahman, the impersonal Self, the absolute Truth, the only Reality without a second absolute reality by its side, is the Higher Brahman. This

Higher Brahman, this principle of reality when viewed as associated with the co-eternal principle of unreality, *i. e.*, Maya or the creative principle, is called Lower Brahman, or Iswara. This Brahman again, when connected with further developments of Maya, is looked upon as an individual. To understand this idea more thoroughly let us imagine an algebraical series such as  $x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3$  &c..... *ad infinitum*. Here we see that each of the succeeding terms in the series varies according to its index or power. On account of the difference of the index only, the terms of the series appear different from one another ; but we see that the base  $x$  remains all along constant. Now if we suppose the indices, *viz.*, 1, 2, 3, &c. to vanish, we see that all the terms become one and the same, since  $x^0$ , will always be the same as unity. If we apply the signs to illustrate the Vedanta

doctrine, we take the power or index to be Maya, varying at each step of its development, and the constant  $x$  to be Brahman, appearing in different Souls. When this Maya, like the index, vanishes, (*i. e.*, when the index is reduced to zero) the individual being, like each of the terms in the series, becomes Brahman, which like the first term of the series is represented by unity. The different terms represent Brahman, Iswara, Taijasa, and Prajna, &c., to endless individuals.

Let us now speak a few words about the nature of this Higher Brahman. To make the idea clear I shall quote the Upanishads:—तदेतत् ब्रह्मापूर्वमनपरमनन्तरमवाह्यम्. (It has nothing before it or after it, nothing without it or within it.)

न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति न वाग्गच्छति नो मनो न विद्मो न विजानीमो यस्मैतदनुशिष्यादन्यदेव तद्विदिताद्योऽविदितादधि (Where eyes cannot penetrate,



where words are baffled, and where minds fail. We cannot know it, we cannot grasp it. Whom, therefore, shall we instruct about it ? It is beyond the known and beyond the unknown.)

यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनोमतम् ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वम् विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥

यच्चक्षुषा न पश्यति येन चक्षूषि पश्यति ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वम् विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥

यच्छ्रोत्रेण न शृणोति येन श्रोत्रमिदं श्रुतम् ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वम् विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥

यत् प्राणेन न प्राणिति येन प्राणः प्रणीयते ।

तदेव ब्रह्म त्वम् विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते ॥

(Which, *i. e.*, Brahman, the mind cannot know, but by which the mind is known ; which the eyes cannot see but by which the eyes are seen ; which, the ears cannot hear but by which the ears are heard ; which the vital airs cannot breathe, but by which they are breathed : you are to



know that as Brahman and not that which is worshipped).

अशब्दमस्पर्शमरूपमव्ययं  
तथारसद्वित्यमगन्धवच्चयत् ।  
अनाद्यनन्तश्महतः परन्ध्रुवं  
निचाय्य तन्मृत्युमुखात् प्रमुच्यते ॥

(He, who has perceived that which is without sound, without touch, without form, without decay, without taste, eternal, without smell, without beginning, without end, beyond the Great and unchangeable, is freed from the jaws of death).

न तत्र सूर्योभाति न चन्द्रतारक  
त्रेमा विद्युतोभान्तिकुतोऽयमग्निः ।  
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति स्रव  
न्तस्यभासा सर्व्वमिदं विभाति ॥  
ब्रह्म वेदममृतं पुरस्ताद्ब्रह्म  
पश्चाद्ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण ।

अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्मैवेदं  
विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठं ॥

(The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings and much less the fire. When he shines, everything shines after him. By his light all this is lighted. That immortal Brahman is before, that Brahman is behind, that Brahman is right and left. It has gone forth below and above :—Brahman alone is all this : it is the best).

This Brahman is the uncaused cause of all, but in its real essence and pushing the world-fiction and its figments out of view, it is neither cause nor not cause, nor both cause and not cause. It is other than the known, and above the unknown, *i. e.*, it is the same as the self of the knowing subject. It is this pure light which actuates the inner sense by irradiation, and as this pure light or self transcends all

objects of outer and inner sense, the inward sense is incompetent to approach it. Brahman causes the unconscious modes conscious modes of the mind. It is self-luminous. It is unconscious, for consciousness begins with duality. It is the intelligence and thought without any objects. It is the eternal knowledge without any object to be known. It is dreamless thought. Brahman is beatitude, *i. e.*, bliss beyond the distinction of subject and object. We can say Brahman is knowledge, and not that Brahman has knowledge. Thus Brahman is existent thought, bliss, truth, and infinity. Thus it is absolutely unacceptable to human thought and not expressible by human words. यतो वाचो निवर्त्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह *i. e.*, where words fail and mind cannot reach.

Whatever attempt is made to describe Brahman, it fails, and we are only justified in saying, *it is not so, it is not so.* So

Brahman is pure, as being untouched by the world-fiction, passionless, and inert ; it is intelligent as, being self-luminous, it is free as being unembodied, and therefore exempt from the miseries of Individual life.

Now, gentlemen, instead of prolonging our discourse by dwelling on the subject of absolute Brahman, which subject alone will fill up volumes without our being able to arrive at any satisfactory, or even partial exposition of it, I may be allowed to pass on to the second view of Brahman, the lower or the Saguna, *i. e.*, qualified Brahman. Here the question arises why is this view of Brahman presented before us ? To understand this, we should know that by the side of this sublime view of Brahman, the impersonal and absolute Being, which is the only truth with the reflective portion of men, there is the popular concept of Brahman as the per-



sonal God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. This concept is the outcome of Avidya or Nescience, but it is not entirely to be disregarded as meaningless. It is practically and phenomenally true, and not utterly false, *i. e.*, not like the concept of a mirage, or the horn of a hare. The phenomenal and the false are different. The phenomenal is not actually a non-entity, but is practically real. Here lies the peculiar merit of the Vedanta. Thus we can take the absolute, or Nirguna Brahman, to satisfy our reasoning and meditative faculties, or we may think of this qualified or Saguna Brahman to satisfy our cravings for worship, and call it by any name suitable to our purposes of devotion. Thus it is said that :—

तयो सांख्यं योगः पञ्चप्रतिमत्तं वैष्णवमिति  
 प्रभिन्ने प्रस्थाने परममिदमदः पथ्यमिति च ।  
 रुचोनां वैचित्तराट्टजुकुटिलनानापथजुषां  
 नृणामेकोगम्यस्त्वमसि पयसामर्षव इव ॥



(Though the ways of devotional life of men, taking to various systems of worship, are ever so different, though some ways are straight-forward and others round-about according to their different tastes, following either the Vedic doctrine or the Sankhya method, or the Yoga system, or the Shaiva School, or the Vaisnava faith ; yet Thou art, O Lord ! the only resting-place of all, as the ocean is the ultimate destination of all the running waters on the surface of the globe.) Thus the second concept of Brahman is that of the Saguna or qualified Brahman — a personal being, eternally associated with the world-fiction, or the creative principle, *i. e.*, Maya or Nescience. In this view he becomes the Creator, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, &c. Characterless absolute Brahman cannot produce the world, because it is characterless, as the sun reflected in the water can-

not produce the reflection, if there be no water. The image of the sun on a sheet of water expands with the expansion, and contracts with the contraction of the ripples on the surface, moves by their motion, and is broken by their breaking. So the reflection varies, and not the sun in the sky. In the same way, the real self, the absolute Brahman, is only reflected on its counterfeits, the bodies of living beings, and appears in different forms. Apart from these phenomenal forms, the Brahman is changeless and unvaried.

Here it may be asked, why go we so far as to conceive fictitious limitations of Brahman? Will it not be sufficient to think that Brahman is the only truth, and the world a non-entity? The answer would be, yes, it is so, only this non-entity is not like the non-entity which is in the horn of a hare, but it has a phenomenal existence, *i. e.*, a practical truth,

which must be accounted for. Thus the concept of Iswara is equally valid as that of our own individuality. Thus the Saguna, or qualified Brahman, is the absolute or Nirguna Brahman when looked upon as associated with Maya, or world-fiction. That Brahman is eternally connected with the world-fiction we cannot gainsay, when we know that we cannot conceive a total destruction,—a perfect annihilation of matter. Thus the world must exist phenomenally for all time, only changing in shape, because what we cannot conceive cannot be possible. Thus, being associated with Maya, comes Iswara, the world-projecting Deity, the lower Brahman, who is only phenomenal to the enlightened Vedantist. But to the unenlightened he is relatively real. Thus he is the first manifestation proceeding from the absolute Brahman associated with Maya. He is the sum of all individual

Souls in the state of dreamless sleep, and his body, the principle of emanation, is the sum of bodies of living beings in that state. He is one, and the individual Souls are many, as a sheet of water is one, and the drops of water are many, as the forest is one, and the trees in it are many. In this phenomenal form he is called the Omniscient, &c. &c., the ruler of the universe, administering justice, giving rewards, inflicting punishments, setting all Souls in motion, and dwelling in the heart of every sentient being. Thus it will be seen that this Iswara is not like the God of other religions, standing in one corner of the universe, bidding the world to grow, and existing apart from the universe as the ruler of it. This is to a Vedantist a Fetishism, and he cannot reconcile it to his reason and common sense. This Vedantic Iswara is the sum of all souls, and is resolved into the high-



est truth, the absolute Brahman, at the end of the world, and issues forthwith the world from eternity. In this form He is worshipped as Iswara, Parusha, and many other names. He is तत्त्वज्ञान, i. e. the world is born out of him, it is absorbed in him, and it breathes in him. He remains in the heart of men. In this view he is measured as the thumb, which is the fanciful measure of the human heart. But, gentlemen, we are not to understand that there are two Brahmans, the one unconditioned and the other conditioned. With us, indeed, who are concerned with names and forms,—the product of Nescience,—there are two. But in reality the two are one and the same. The one is conceivable and the other is inconceivable, the one is phenomenal and the other is absolutely real.

A description of Parusha will not be out of place here. Rigveda X. :



सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।  
 स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वात्यतिष्टद्दशाङ्गुलम् ॥  
 पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यम् ।  
 उतामृतत्वस्थेयानो यदन्नेनातिरोहति ॥  
 एतावानस्य महिमा ततोऽज्यायाश्चंपूरुषः ।  
 पादोऽस्य विश्वाभूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि ॥

(Purusha, the creator, has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. He compasses the world on every side, and moreover, remains ten finger's breadth beyond, *i.e.*, pervades space, if there be any, beyond the universe. Purusha is all this; He is that which has been, and that which will come into existence. He is the Lord also of immortality, *i.e.*, of gods and he is the Lord of all which grow with food. Such is His greatness, and this Purusha is greater than His greatness. One quarter of Him *i.e.*, a part of him only, is all existing things, the remaining three

quarters, *i.e.*, the greater portion of Him is eternally present in the luminous sky *i. e.*, in space illuminated by His light.)

य एष सुतेषु जागर्त्ति कामं  
 कामं पुरुषो निर्दिशामाणः ।  
 तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवासुतमुच्यते ॥  
 तस्मिँहोवाः श्रिताः सर्वे  
 तदु नात्येति कश्चन ।  
 अग्निर्यदैकोभुवनं प्रविष्टो  
 रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव ॥  
 एकोवशी सर्वभुतान्तरात्मा  
 एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति ।  
 तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरा  
 स्तेषां शाश्वतन्नेतरिषाम् ॥

(The Spirit that is awake in those who are asleep, fashioning one enjoyment after another. This is the pure Self, this is

the immortal: all worlds are contained in it: beyond this none can pass.

As one and the same fire pervades a place, and shapes itself according to the shapes of every thing (in which it is seen); so the one Self, that remains in all living beings, shapes itself according to their different shapes. The wise see within their own hearts the one and only Lord, the Self that is in all living beings, that makes its one form to become many: everlasting bliss is for them and not for others.)

Now, gentlemen, we come to the ethical teaching of the Vedanta. Many charges have been brought against the Vedanta as regards its morality by thoughtless readers, and interested sectarians. Some of these are quoted as follows:—

(1) That the Vedanta inculcates a hedonistic code of ethics, and that it is highly selfish, inasmuch as it makes people

utterly apathetic and indifferent as regards the miseries and sufferings of others, who are considered as only illusions, and because it enjoins a man to concern himself with his own Moksha, or salvation, without minding the world at large, which with him is only a myth.

(2) That the Vedanta makes a man perfectly irresponsible for his actions, for the senses find their objects and act with them, whereas the Ego, the Self, which is pure bliss, is never affected in any way by those actions. The idea of duty towards others is utterly absent in the Vedanta.

(3) That the Vedanta is deficient, because it cannot supply a solid foundation of morality.

(4) That the system of the Vedanta has no object for worship, or indeed anything to elicit and sustain religious life. So it was compelled to crave the help of polytheism.



Besides these, we often meet with many other clumsy reflections against this high system of philosophy, and these we pass by in silence, knowing that truth will ultimately prevail.

Now, Gentlemen, the sole origin of all these worthless charges and remarks lies in not thoroughly comprehending the doctrine of Nescience, *i. e.*, of Avidya. To the careful reader, it is clear as daylight that the Vedanta, in calling the external world an illusion, does not mean illusion in the ordinary sense of the term. It clearly distinguishes two classes of illusions, one altogether unreal and thus, like the mirage, only an apparition behind which there is no reality ; the other only phenomenal, and behind which there is a substantial reality. So what the Vedanta calls Maya is not an unreality in our sense of the term. It is reality along with the phenomenal. This we have



clearly seen while speaking about Nescience.

Before giving a Vedantic reply to all these charges, I ought to state that most of the learned thinkers of the age are of opinion that morality is not to be founded upon religion, but should always have an independent basis of its own.

To meet all the above charges in a body, the Vedantist would quote the important expression "तत्त्वमसि," the Mahavakya, as it is called. It will be seen that this short expression is the fountain of morality, the source of universal love, and the very ocean of all our noble feelings and religious sentiments. The highest idea of morality as regards other people is expressed in the well-known sentence, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." But the Vedanta goes further and says, "your neighbour is yourself, and you are to love him, not because he is your neighbour,

but because he is not different from yourself." To a Vedantist वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् *i. e.*, the whole world, is his own. According to the Vedanta, he is called learned who sees every other being as he does himself. "आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु यः पश्यति स पण्डितः". In loving a neighbour as a neighbour, we can see nothing reasonable except that the idea is revelation, but in loving a neighbour as oneself, we have sufficient reason, supported by revelation. Jagnavalka (याज्ञवल्क्य) says to his wife, Maitreyi, in the Brihadaranyak-opanishad: "Verily, a husband is not dear, that you may love the husband; but that you may love the Self, therefore the husband is dear," and so forth. This is the Vedantic revelation. Now, no one likes to injure himself. No evidence is required to prove this. When a Vedantist considers everyman as not different from his own self, it is plain that he can not possibly

injure his neighbour. Sruti says *मा हिंसात् सर्व्वे सृतानि* " i.e., no one should injure any living being. Is not this simple expression more pregnant with ideas of universal love, than the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" ? It is said that a *जोबन्मुक्त*, i. e., an enlightened Vedantist, is not bound to follow any law of morality, as the world with him is only an illusion. This remark is the shallowest of all. Gentlemen, the man who had to practise self-denial, self-restraint, concentration of the mind, hardships necessary to study, collectedness and faith, solely for the purpose of being initiated into the mystery of this philosophical secret,—the man, who after constant abstractions of the mind, realises the high principle that the world and its pleasures are worth nothing, and that his Soul is one and the same with the highest Self,—the man who

comes to understand that his bitterest social enemy is no other than himself,— nay, the man who has no interest to realise, no party to follow, no kinsmen to please, and no riches to earn, such a man is supposed by these critics to live by injuring his neighbours, by neglecting his duties, by pleasing only his own passions, nay by killing his mother and father. This is far from being the case. But thinking is free and people can think as they please. Gentlemen, it is difficult to think rightly. Though such an impertinent question, as why an enlightened Vedantist should obey the moral laws, since actions can no longer affect him, cannot reasonably be raised at all, yet such careless thinkers were anticipated by the learned teachers of the Vedanta. They say, in reply, that an enlightened Vedantist will act in accordance with strict moral laws, on account of



his long-acquired habits of morality which have become natural to him. A more reasonable reply cannot be imagined. A Vedantist, before he is enlightened, sees the world as every other man does, and the world to him is as much a reality as himself. In this state, his feelings are the same as those of any other man. He has his duties to perform, he has his Iswara to worship, he has his faculties operating for various ends, and lastly he has freedom to acquire the true knowledge, *i.e.*, the knowledge of Brahman. After he is enlightened, he considers the world as phenomenal, and sees the truth behind this phenomenal and illusory world, but at the same time, while he lives with his material body, he lives like a sensible man with his acquired habits acting upon him as his second nature. Professor Max Muller has very aptly said, that we find



ethics in the beginning (of the Vedanta), ethics in the middle, and ethics at the end. By this he probably means to say that the young aspirant to the Vedantic secret is a highly moral man in the beginning, the reader of this secret, living a life of austerities in the middle, is a highly moral being, and an enlightened Vedantist dies at the end as a type of morality. Gentlemen, it is said that Vedantism countenances polytheism. But to enlighten our learned critics, we must inform them that there is no such thing as polytheism with right thinking Hindus. No image that they worship is considered as a god or goddess in itself, but it is the presiding principle in it that is worshipped, the Iswara, who is present in it, is adored, nay it is the very manifestation of Brahman itself, in a particular form of thought, that is meditated upon. With the Hindus there is

no real idol-worship. This is clearly proved by the unholy nature of the idol itself before and after it is worshipped.

Looked at from an utilitarian point of view, the Vedanta teaches the highest and most perfect form of utilitarianism in the world. If utilitarianism means the greatest good to the greatest number, the Vedanta teaches the highest good to the whole number. It teaches the universal good, the universal truth, the universal love, and the universal joy.

It is said that the Vedanta does not promise any hopes of future happiness to man. Gentlemen, here our critic is right so far. But it should be remembered that even heavenly bliss, not to speak of earthly happiness, is condemned by the Vedanta, and rightly so, as being fleeting and transitory, and therefore not worth enjoying. The heavenly bliss, which, by the law of the transmigration of souls,

is sure to result in a change which must on its own account be intolerable, should not and cannot be, according to the Vedantistic view, the highest goal of man. A Vedantist wants an existence of eternal and peaceful joy, from where there is no falling back, no retreat. This hope at least the Vedanta promises. That transmigration, with its horde of miseries, is far more desirable than remaining in purgatory for an indefinite time is obvious to all. When we think that salvation, in the Vedantic sense, can take place at any moment of a person's life, we are justified in pronouncing that the Vedanta holds out better hopes and better prospects, to us than any other system of theology.

Gentlemen, a few words on the sacred syllable *Om* will not be out of place here. Much has been said about it by the critics of the Vedanta. Even Pro-

fessor Max Muller, the great admirer of the Vedanta Philosophy, while speaking about this syllable, tells us that what is said in the Upanishads about *Om* seems to him mere twaddle. But, regretting apparently this strange remark of his, he exonerates himself by telling us that *Om* originally might have some meaning. It might have been the contraction of a former "Avam", meaning "that", while "Ayam" in Sanskrit means "this". In that meaning *Om* would stand for *tat, viz., "it"* in the great saying तत्त्वमसि *i. e., Thou art it.* In this way, he adds, *Om* ultimately might have been used in the sense of *Amen* in English. Gentlemen, in dealing with such a subject, our European critics labour under a great disadvantage. They are not accustomed to the Indian methods of treating a subject, or viewing a thing. प्राणदृष्ट्या उपासीत, *i. e., "Brahman should be worshipped, view-*



ing it as our vitality," and such other expressions, are very often used in our religious literature. Viewing a thing in some form or other, according to a man's convenience, is very much in vogue amongst the Hindus. In harmony with this practice, the idea of *Om* has been explained and interpreted in many different ways, which appear to a foreigner meaningless. We have no room here for the different interpretations of *Om*. But it should be understood that the sacredness of *Om* is attributable to the following facts :—

- (1) It was the most fitting verbal symbol of Brahman.
- (2) It was frequently used in religious performances.
- (3) It combines extreme simplicity of sound with depth of meaning.
- (4) Its sanction from time immemorial.
- (5) The very unobjectionable nature



of its import which is applicable to any form of worship.

A word cannot be thought of as having any value in itself. All its value depends on its signification. A word and its signification are inseparable. *Om* signifies Brahman, and therefore it is the most sacred syllable. The word *Brahman* is equally sacred, but it is not suitable for purposes of meditation, simply because it is connected with other ideas, such as the idea of development, &c. Not so is *Om*. A Vedantist utters this syllable, and his attention is at once directed to the centre of existence without being disturbed by any other idea. In the Manduka Upanishads, *Om* is analysed as अ (*a*) the वैश्वानर, (Vaiswanara), उ (*u*) the तैजस (Taijasa), and म (*ma*) the प्राज्ञ (Prajna), and thus three manifestations of Brahman are signified by it. The fourth is not a letter, but the whole syllable, and

as such is unspeakable, like Brahman. Sankara says that *Om* is the most proximate name of Brahman. Be that as it may, the meditation and utterance of *Om* are to be considered as religious ceremonies, leading a man not to salvation but to the region of Brahmá, the first manifestation of Brahman. There are many names of Hindu gods and goddesses, used in reference to images, but *Om* is a name used only to signify Brahman, the unknowable and the unspeakable. It was for this reason that the value of *Om* has been so often extolled. In the Puranas अ (a) means the Creator, व (v) the Preserver, and म (ma) the Destroyer. With the Shaivas, the arrangement of the letters in *Om* being interchanged, it has been changed into वम i. e., *vam*, which means the same thing. Thus in every system of Hindu worship, the three letters expressed in *Om* are very often repeated

and adored only because the simple syllable very adequately signifies the Highest Deity.

Gentlemen, all along these pages we have spoken of the Vedanta as a theory. Now a theory is held to be valid if it satisfactorily explains all the phenomena that come under it. Testing it by this logical canon, we see that the Vedanta system is the most correct system of hypothetic philosophy, which treats about transcendental knowledge, all other ancient systems of this nature having been partly or wholly exploded by modern scientific research. The unique character of the Vedantic Philosophy lies in this, that it can satisfy both a Huxley and a Max-Muller.

In conclusion, it would be interesting to quote the opinions of some learned European thinkers on the Vedanta system.

1. Schopenhauer says, "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death."

2. Professor MaxMuller fully endorses the opinion of Schopenhauer as the result of his own experience.

3. Sir W. Jones says, "it is impossible to read the Vedanta without believing that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the sages of India."

4. Victor Cousin says that when reading the Vedanta, he is constrained to bend his knees before the system of Eastern Philosophy, meaning the Vedanta Philosophy.

5. Frederiek Schlegel says that the early Indians possessed a knowledge of the true God, and that the loftiest philosophy of Europe appears, in comparison



with the abundant light and vigour of oriental Idealism, (meaning the Vedanta), like a feeble Promethean spark in the full flood of heavenly glory of the noon-day sun, faltering and feeble, and ever ready to be extinguished

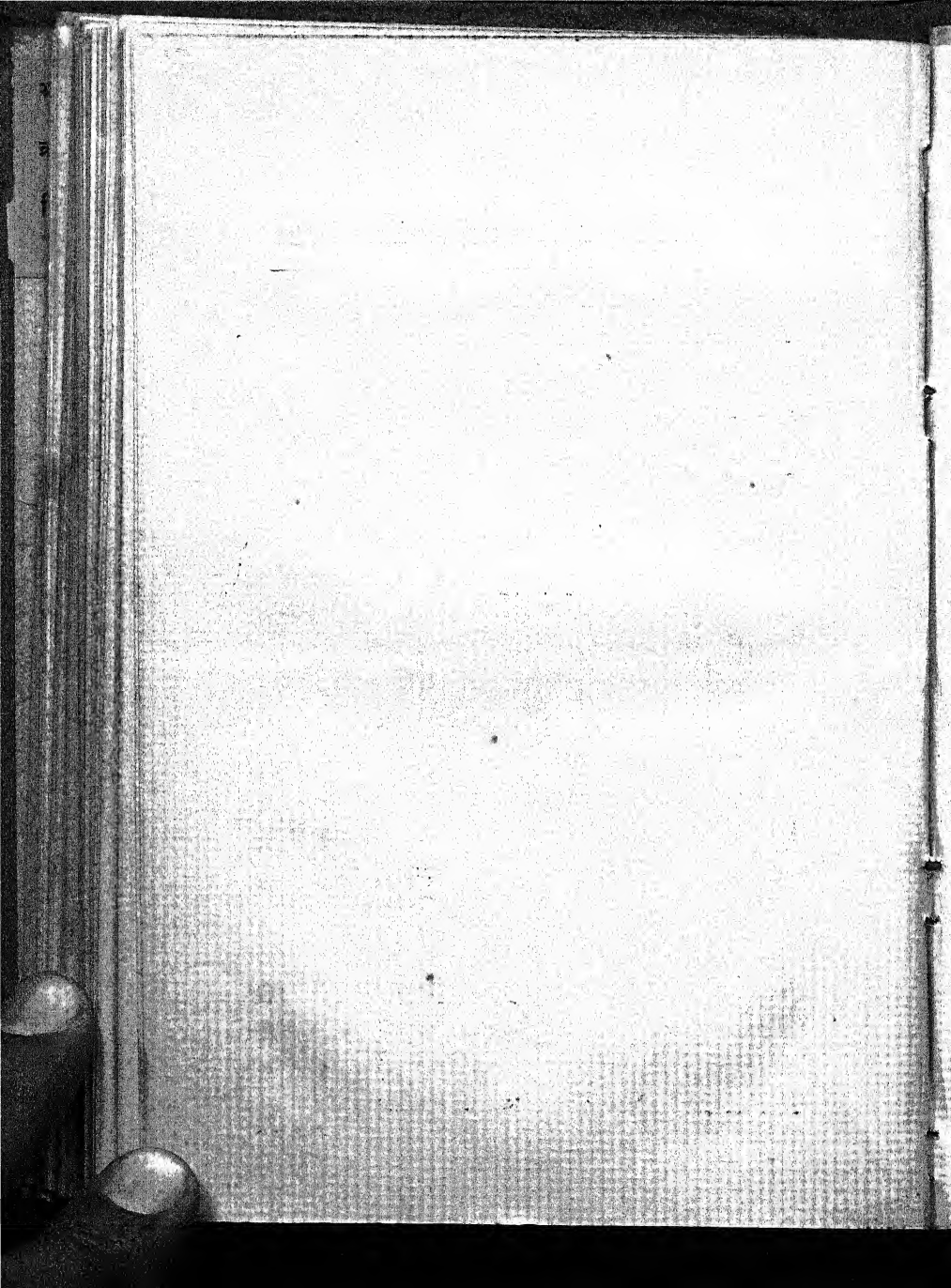
6. Professor Deussen says, "the system of the Vedanta equals in rank to Plato and Kant, and, is one of the most valuable products of the genius of mankind in its search for the eternal truth."

Thus a Vedantist might fearlessly assert that his ancient philosophy, although it dates far back into the twilight of history, has won the admiration and approval of many wise and profound thinkers of every age;—that, when divested of its sectarian garb, it represents appropriately a universal and comprehensive psychology;—and that there is no form of religion existing in the world that cannot be brought within the pale of its



wonderful system of thought, a system, of which India will ever remain proud, and by means of which she will surely recover, at no distant future, her departed glory.

THE END.



## APPENDIX.

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In the preceding pages an attempt has been made to give a clear, but concise exposition of *Vedantism*; but the author was prevented from giving a fuller treatment to his subject, by the exigencies of a lecture delivered to a large audience on whose patience he was obliged to keep his eye and thus exclude many things which, however much he wished to put them into the discourse, he could not then conveniently dwell upon. He has, therefore, gladly availed himself of this second impression of the essay, to insert the following remarks in the form of an appendix on some points which, he felt then and still feels to be necessary for an intelligent appreciation of the subject. He will have to say over again much that has already been said in the main body of the essay; but the matter con-

tained in the following pages being complementary to what has been said in the preceding pages, a certain amount of repetition will be unavoidable.

The subject of *Vedantism* is very abstruse ; it is much to be feared that within the compass of a few pages it may not be possible to say all that is required. It should, however, be borne in mind that this is only a popular exposition of the subject, dealing only with its very broad and salient features, without any attempt at an elaborate discussion of minute details.

Although, *Vedantism* offers great difficulties to the average intelligence, it cannot be gainsaid that directly or indirectly, it has greatly influenced the mind and conduct of the teeming millions of the Hindu population of India ; in America, also, its influence has now begun to be felt. There is scarcely a Hindu

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who is not sensibly or insensibly a Vedantist. The Hindu knows intuitionally that the world is an illusion ; that pain and pleasure, the whole panorama of life, with its manifold activities ending in Death—all these are neither better nor worse than Maya. Just as this view on the one hand, affords him rational consolation in the midst of his saddest depression, so, on the other hand, it makes him impose a restraint upon himself amidst his highest elation of spirit. The fleeting joys and sorrows of the world have little effect upon him ; yesterdays and todays come and go ; and whether he is immersed in the tumult and bustle of the world, or lives away from them in the tranquil contemplation of his soul, questioning his heart for an explanation of the mysteries that surround him, he finds himself ever ready for whatever may befall him, for he knows that they



are inevitable ; and he does not take them to heart, because he is aware of their transitoriness. His heredity and environment are potent influences in moulding his character and shaping his actions, be he a learned man, steeped in all the knowledge of the world, or an illiterate drudge, a hewer of wood and drawer of water ; whatever he be, he seldom fails to be a true disciple of *Vedantism*. For *Vedantism* is both a philosophy and a religion. It is not only a theoretical system for the edification of the chosen few, but also a code of ethics, laying down practical rules of conduct for the many. As philosophy it deals with cosmogony, the origin of the universe and of the various phenomena manifesting themselves in the facts and events of Nature and of the human mind ; and thus from its speculative aspect, it goes forth to meet the practical aspect of

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life and lays the foundation of those rules which guide and govern our relations with each other as members of a vast society and with Him who is the First and absolute Cause of all things.

Modern Science with its agnostic tendencies, will, however ask us : "Is the human mind omniscient ? Is it possible for man with his limited intelligence and reason to know that which is unknowable ? Should he not allow the "unaccountable and supernatural" to rest unfathomed while he confines his attention to the world about him which is subject to his sense-perception and which, consequently, he can predicate about with a sure knowledge ? We want some material grounds, Science says, for our beliefs, otherwise we should dismiss them as superstitious—unworthy of our serious thought and attention. The logical inference from this reasoning of Modern

Science is that absolute knowledge is denied to man, that what he can and does know is limited to the external world of sense and that, therefore, all metaphysical questions, which lie outside his sense-perception, are beyond the scope a range of his fettered reason. This view of Science, although quite consistent with its scope and procedure, expresses only a half-truth. For, even in spite of Science, there is in every one of us a craving for a knowledge outside the world of sense, a feeling that the external phenomenon of the world of matter, the region of sense-perception is not the highest category of experience, and that the heart of man is never at rest so long as its desire to know what lies beyond and behind the world of phenomena is not satisfied. Man feels that his life is only partially realised if, with his eyes open to the world of sense, he

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remains blind to the super-sensuous world.

Man's spiritual beliefs which, on the speculative side, tell him of his relations, and on the practical side, tell him of his duties towards all created beings, thus laying the foundation of his rules of conduct, have for him as much real existence as those which come within the sphere of his knowledge acquired through his senses. But modern Science proceeding on the assumption that man's Reason is limited, confines herself to the external and material world of the senses, and failing to take account of the super-sensuous world, laughs its existence away. And so it comes to pass that the modern age, being fed and nourished on what Science gives it, proclaims that beyond the region of what is knowable, there is absolute ignorance and that the culmination of knowledge, is precisely at the

point where the knowable and the unknowable—the known and the unknown—come into contact.

This attitude of Science does not satisfy the human heart ; so far from deriving any comfort from what Science teaches, man instinctively feels that Science, being *Para-Vidya* (पराविद्या) fails to grapple with and account for, the world of our spiritual experience. He, therefore, turns to metaphysics, to *Apara-Vidya* (अपराविद्या) ; for herein alone there is satisfaction for the hankerings of the heart ; it alone enables him to fathom the mysteries that Science can never explain. The eternal verities of the Universe are untouched and shall always remain untouched by Science, be she ever so progressive. Science will give us bread ; and for bread we shall knock at her door. But since, 'Man lives not by bread alone', we shall, as years roll on and we find



Science ever and anon disappointing our hopes, sit at the feet of the sages of antiquity to receive from them those truths which they alone can give us.

In spite of the wonderful advance of modern civilization, in spite, also, of the marvellous achievements of Science in reducing the forces of nature to the condition of slaves to minister to the needs of man, and to make him materially comfortable, he yet feels a degree of discontent and cannot help coming to the conclusion that Science, her great progress notwithstanding, has in one department at least shown herself conspicuously inefficient. And so he feels a yearning to turn for more light and illumination to the *Rishis*, for an explanation of the ultra sensuous phenomena which, along with his sense perceptions, form his world. The study of *Vedantism* is, for this reason, of the highest importance to man.

There is the world of matter ; and there is also the world of mind ; and these two, Mind and Matter, form only a part of the categories of our experience. We grasp and interpret them through, and in terms of, our senses. But we have a further conviction that underlying the two worlds which are, for two moments, never the same, there is some permanent principle which also requires to be grasped and interpreted. But can our senses, transient as they are, adequately grasp that permanent principle which stands beyond and behind the everchanging and sensuous world of mind and matter ? Can they interpret it in terms of our senses ? And yet this underlying permanent principle requires to be grasped and interpreted. If we honestly and bravely face the problem of the Universe, we cannot help asking ourselves with an insistency which can never be put off : Is the material world

all in all—the only thing which requires to be studied and explained, or is there not something behind it, which is not capable of being analysed in the crucible of the scientist, but which yet, we feel, exists and demands an explanation? We appeal to Science; but she is mute. And since she cannot give a satisfactory reply, she takes refuge either in agnosticism or in denying the existence of the super-sensuous world. The *Ego* is nothing more to her than an illusion, and matter is nothing but a bundle of sensations; or may it not be, says Science, that the permanent principle of which metaphysics speaks and which forms the substratum of Mind and Matter, if it does at all exist, transcends all human knowledge and cannot then be said to belong to the categories of human experience? But neither Nihilism, which denies the reality of things, nor agnosticism, which places

supersensuous things beyond the categories of human experience gives us any satisfaction.

*Vedantism*, however, offers us a satisfactory interpretation. While admitting sense experience to be the source of our knowledge of the material world, it calls our attention to the existence of something permanent and eternal behind it—something which our senses cannot grasp, much less explain. This permanent basis of phenomena is *maya* or as it is also called, *Mula Prakriti* मूल प्रकृति ; it is, in other words, the Divine Power, the *Sakti* शक्ति of the Creator, into which all things resolve themselves eventually. The ultimate fact of the Universe is, therefore, the *Brahman* to whom, or, to speak more accurately, to whose *maya* is to be attributed the phenomenal world.

The power that we associate with the *Brahman* is manifested in the creation of

the world; and so long as we confine our attention to the world by which is meant the external things in the region, either of matter or of mind, so long, that is, as we attach ourselves to the phenomenal universe, we cannot rise above it to reach that which lies beyond; the eternal verities are hidden away from us and *maya* becomes identical with ignorance. Once more: the knowledge of phenomena or of the facts of the external world so completely engrosses our attention that we are blinded to the higher problem—the underlying principle of the Creation; no wonder then that *maya* or the divine creative power manifesting itself in the material world has come to be recognised as illusion—which shuts out from us the vision of the Creator, the Supreme Infinite Being and the real object of our knowledge. And thus it is that *maya*, in popular conception, has undergone a



degradation of meaning. Originally signifying Divine Power, it has now come to be interpreted as ignorance or illusion which, confining our attention to creation, veils from us the sight of the Creator—the Highest Reality.

And herein lies the greater importance of Metaphysics than that of Science, viz, that, while the latter is of the 'Earth, Earthly' the former transcends the phenomenal world and peeps into higher truths. The highest knowledge which Science will enable us to reach will still leave the heart unsatisfied and wistfully stretching itself out to something lying beyond the material world it will refuse to be satisfied unless and until *maya* or the veil of ignorance is removed and the soul realises in itself the absolute Infinite Being, that is 'an unchangeable Essence with infinite attributes.'

How then is the final goal, the realisa-

tion of the underlying eternal verities, that transcend the world of चित्प्रतेज मरुद-  
व्योम, the world of colour, sound, taste, touch and smell, to be attained? The knowledge of the material world is obtained through our senses; so long as we retain these unimpaired, that knowledge will come of itself—But the knowledge of the permanent underlying substratum is not easy of attainment. One has to submit one's self to the highest and the most painful discipline. Constituted as the world is, it is full of alluring temptations; "Earth fills her lap with pleasures all her own." And man, weak and a victim to his *Karma* as he is, has to be supplied with the means of discipline. The Cult of *Vedanta* places in his hands those means; it teaches him a code of ethics which, if lived upon, will, despite his weakness and the thousand and one temptations that at every step

beset him, yet enable him to reach the goal.

And that highest perfection can be attained by practising "renunciation, tranquillity, self-restraint and *sraddha* ( श्रद्धा ) or faith." And what is renunciation? In the material world of actions, our senses are ever vigilant; they are always ready to receive impressions. In the world of mind, too, we are constantly busy in analysing its component elements. But for the world which lies beyond and behind the world of matter or of mind, there is no field for the activities of the senses; there they avail us not. Rather, they stand as hinderances and are consequently to be suppressed. But mere 'shutting our eyes and our hearts against the illusions of the world' is not the only condition which will enable us to attain to the eternal truths. Suppression of our senses is, indeed, a necessary condition ;

but along with it, there ought to be absolute devotion—a devotion which will completely blind us to all external things and will not allow us to be disturbed by any process that may lure the attention away from contemplation; it will, ultimately, make us forget the world and deaf to all the calls that it makes to us. This condition of complete withdrawal from the world and its affairs is Renunciation; and the man, who trains himself into it, is in the enjoyment of tranquillity which leaves him unaffected by the world and its concerns so fully that he can approach the object of his pursuit with an undivided attention; and to him, therefore, the Self is revealed in a fuller light than it is to the man who is immersed in the world of sense.

But along with Renunciation, tranquillity and devotion, Self-Control is also a concomitant condition for the realisa-

tion of his aim. For, without it, the mind is distracted by passions and is so prevented from the complete realisation of the truths which it is longingly in search of and which, without single-ness of aim would never be possible.

Nor is *Shraddha*, or faith, to be banished from the mind of the earnest devotee, pursuing the search of the verities; he should bring to it a lowliness of heart, with Reason to show him his way, and Faith to whisper to him that the verities are the only Realities and that they are knowable, if only we approach them with humility, reverence, and in the spirit of renunciation, resignation, undisturbed peace and self-control.

But the teaching of *Verlantism* does not stop here. Earthly desires, passions and attachments, being perilous obstacles in our paths of righteousness, are to be removed completely from us. Moreover,



we should see that we do not injure others, that we actively help those that need our help and love all, for the same principle runs through all. It is thus that the cult builds up a code of ethics which regulates our social relations. It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose that in the pursuit of self, the pursuer becomes so selfish as to care for his own salvation alone, regardless of what comes to others.

In a scheme of philosophy, like that of pure *Vedantism* which refuses to acknowledge a personal God whose commands may be regarded as the foundation of morality and which at the same time declares that salvation lies in obeying the commands, it may, at first sight, appear baffling to the enquirer to find a place for morality. And yet the difficulty is not insurmountable. The *Vedantist* proceeds on the belief that man, although bound by the shackles of *Karma*, has yet a soul

which is the same as the universal Soul. And proceeding thus, he can never stoop to the doing of anything which will contaminate his individual soul ; his thoughts, actions and words will necessarily be pure. He will, because he has rightly understood his nature and his relation with the Infinite Being, bring to bear upon his conduct all that is good and makes for righteousness ; for anything incompatible with righteousness will increase his distance more and more from the Godhead which is his final goal. All evil impulses will be repressed ; and he will realise that mere knowledge, unsupported by virtuous acts, will avail him nothing. Temptations and desires, impulses and passions, which have a marrying effect upon man's soul and prevent it from attaining to the highest bliss, will not come near him ; and he will know and practise penance, charity, truthful

ness and self-abnegation. And, finally, conquering all evil, burning it, being free from it and free from all darkness and doubt that come with evil, he will attain to *Brahman* the consummation of human bliss and the perfect realisation of human existence. "Self-reverence", says the poet,—

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge,  
self-control,  
These three lead life to sovereign power."

It is not the power which Science gives us over the brute forces, of nature; nor is it the power which conquest and standing armies give to earthly kings; it is supreme power which enables man to conquer himself.

From what has been said above, it is obvious that the ethics of *Vedantism* recognises that while moral conduct is the basis of right action, it is not the final goal of man; it is only a means to an end

—that end being nothing more than the realisation of Self—a condition in which the *Jiva* (जीव) sees “self in self”, and ‘all as self’. And thus moral conduct is only a preparation—*adiksha* (दीक्षा) which, although very necessary, yet occupies an inferior position to the highest ideal.

And so it must not be supposed that the realisation of the highest ideal exonerates us at all from the practical performance of our duties. In practical ethics, it is of the highest importance to keep in mind that the phenomenal world is the outcome of the sacrifice made by the Supreme Being who poured out His life for others, in order that “His life might produce and sustain a multiplicity of separate lives?” And as long as we remember this, we cannot fail to be disinterested in our social and domestic relations, we cannot shrink from making sacrifices, even as the *Purusha* (पुरुष) made sacrifice

in order to create the world. Whence arises the conception of Mine and Thine ? Does it not arise from an over-attachment to our own selves ? Is it not due to our *ahankar* (अहङ्कार) ? And, therefore, does not the logical conclusion follow that the suppression of egotism and the practice of self-surrender and self-discipline will lead us ultimately to the height of altruism in which we shall feel that, although individually distinct from the rest, yet in us all, like 'jewels threaded on a string' one common principle of love flows in all its purity and fulness. And the man who can thus sacrifice himself for others lives in peace and amity, in humility and piety, forgiveness and charity ;—all social virtues coming easy to him.

The above, in brief outline, is the philosophic aspect of *Vedantism* ; and, if studied in a proper mood of mind, it will teach us the eternal verities that lie bey-



ond and behind the material phenomenal world. Nor will the effect of the study be limited to the speculative side alone. It has a practical bearing in life. For, it will develop in us all those noble qualities which lead to the perfection of human nature, and will enable us to realise, in the fullest measure, our duties to ourselves and to all created beings in the world.

As a scheme of religion, *Vedantism*, is absolutely unsectarian, embracing all faiths and creeds; and in it are found all those spiritual laws which are recognised by the different religions of the world. The eternal truths which form the basis of all religions are what the *Vedanta* teaches; and so it necessarily follows that, apart from the rites and ceremonies, which, more like accretions than as essentials, have now come to be associated with religion, the religion of the *Vedanta*, rising, as it does, above the narrowness of different

sects and of special religions, is universal and catholic in its scope. It is a religion which admits of no superstitions ; it does not shackle the human mind by any external authority of men and of scripture. Every man can, with the aid of the *Vedanta*, evolve a religion out of himself, out of, that is, his own spiritual experiences, as, indeed, it has been evolved out of the spiritual experiences of the *Rishis* of antiquity.

If it is true that the ultimate aim of all human speculation is to find the reality that lies beyond the world of sense, *Vedantism* would appear to be the culmination of man's knowledge ; and as such, the religion, which has its broad basis on those fundamental truths—the substratum of the Universe—will never fail to satisfy the bankings of the heart. The narrow-mindedness and intolerance which mark the sectarian cannot, because of the universal and abso-

lutely non-sectarian character of the religion of *Vedantism*, approach him who has realised in himself the grand ideal that the Absolute Infinite Being cannot belong, from His very nature, to any particular party ; nor can He be worshipped under any special form or by any particular name.

A true Vedantist rises, by a process of evolution, from the conception of a God outside Nature, through the conception that He is intra-cosmic, to the highest stage, when he comes to realise that he is one with God ;—and then he understands that he has reached “the absolute monistic perception of spiritual oneness”. And when this stage is reached the material world disappears for him and he begins to realise the true purpose of life and to live in happiness, in peace, in absolute abnegation of self and in direct communion with God.

If, therefore, the function of religion is to discover, "the relation of the Finite to the Infinite, of the Universe to the Primal Source of Being from whom all existence proceeds", then the religion of *Vedantism* fulfils that function in the highest measure. It reveals to man the purpose of creation and enables him to realise the '*divine-in-man*'. It leads the votaries to the goal in the Godhead, by placing in their hands the knowledge that the true end of man's existence is the attainment of that condition in which he is liberated from the shackles of births and deaths.

And how is that condition to be attained? Through worship, through self-discipline, through the immolation of the lower passions, through self-culture, in short, through sacrifice in all forms, that goal, the highest for which man exists, is to be reached. He who culti-



vates in himself all virtues, he who lives the life of resignation and abstinence, undisturbed by the distractions of the world; he who lives purely, thinks purely, acts purely, and lives in contemplation—he alone can realise the God-head and can attain to *Moksha* (मोक्ष).

It is often said that *Vedantism*, in its highest form, is indetical with *Quietism*, that it teaches man to withdraw himself completely from the arena of life, to lead a life of inaction, and that the self-abnegation taught by it closes up all the avenues of life in asceticism. That this is not a true appreciation of its teaching will be clear, if we bear in mind that in order to cultivate the virtues and to perform our duties assiduously in the worlds and to fight against the temptations that assail us every moment in our lives, in short, in order to live the life of righteousness, without which we



cannot rise to the realisation of Self in Self, we are always required to be ever vigilant against the powers of evil. And where there is vigilance, Quietism cannot come. So far from encouraging a life of quiet asceticism, far away from the busy scenes of the world, *Vedantism* emphasises the value and dignity of work; for, on work and on it alone, on the active performance of our duties to ourselves and to the whole creation and to the Supreme Being our Salvation depends. The Gita says :—

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैकर्म्यम् पुरुषोऽप्नुते

न च सन्नसनादेव सिद्धिम् समधिगच्छति ॥ (3,4).

All that *Vedantism* aims at teaching through the doctrine of abnegation is निष्कामकर्म—the performance of deed, without a craving for its result.

तस्मादसक्तः सततम् कार्यम् कर्म समाचर ।

असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥ (3,18).

Man's highest duties consist in the active pursuit of Truth ; and if he wants to liberate himself from the fetters of births and deaths, he must perform *Karma*, for on *Karma* alone depends whether he realises himself or mars his soul.

And now what is this doctrine of *Karma* ? The Vedantist may advocate the cult of qualified non-dualism, or he may accept the doctrines of pure *adwaitism*. But there is a perfect unanimity among them all regarding the doctrine of *Karma*. For all think that *Karma* or conduct—the sum-total of our actions—determines the course of the life of the individual on earth. At first sight *Karma* will appear to be indistinguishable from *Fatalism* ; but that the two are distinct from, and even opposed to, each other, can be easily established, if we bear in mind that while *Karma* implies a moral

responsibility out of which there is no escape, the doctrine of fatalism exonerates man from all responsibility, by making him no better than a mere machine working, not because he has a will of his own, but because his course is determined by forces over which he has no control and which, quite irrespective of his will, carries him along a path chalked out for him by irresistible powers outside himself.

The doctrine of *Karma* teaches that man is born in this world as a result of his past deeds—his accumulated (संचित) *Karma*; and according as his deeds are good or bad, his course in this life is determined for him. But because he has a moral responsibility which may be made independent of all external forces, it is for him, to devote himself to virtuous deeds, to atone for, and finally destroy, the sum-total of his *Karma*. This com-

plete destruction of his *Karma*, whether it is संचित, or प्रारब्ध or आगामि, that is, whether it has reference to his past life or to his present life or to the life to come, ought to be the aim of every man who desires to liberate himself from the fetters of birth and death. But how is this total destruction to be effected? The only way to effect it is by living a life of righteousness; for this life is obtained by us to enable us to get release from the burden of rebirth and thus to attain *moksha* (मोक्ष).

The ideal which *Vedantism* holds out to us may appear to be too high for our realisation; but what ideal is not so? Will it, therefore, deter us, if only we know ourselves, from pursuing it? Rather, should we not, highly placed as we are in the scale of creation, aim at making ourselves perfect? It is undeniable that our present state is not fitted



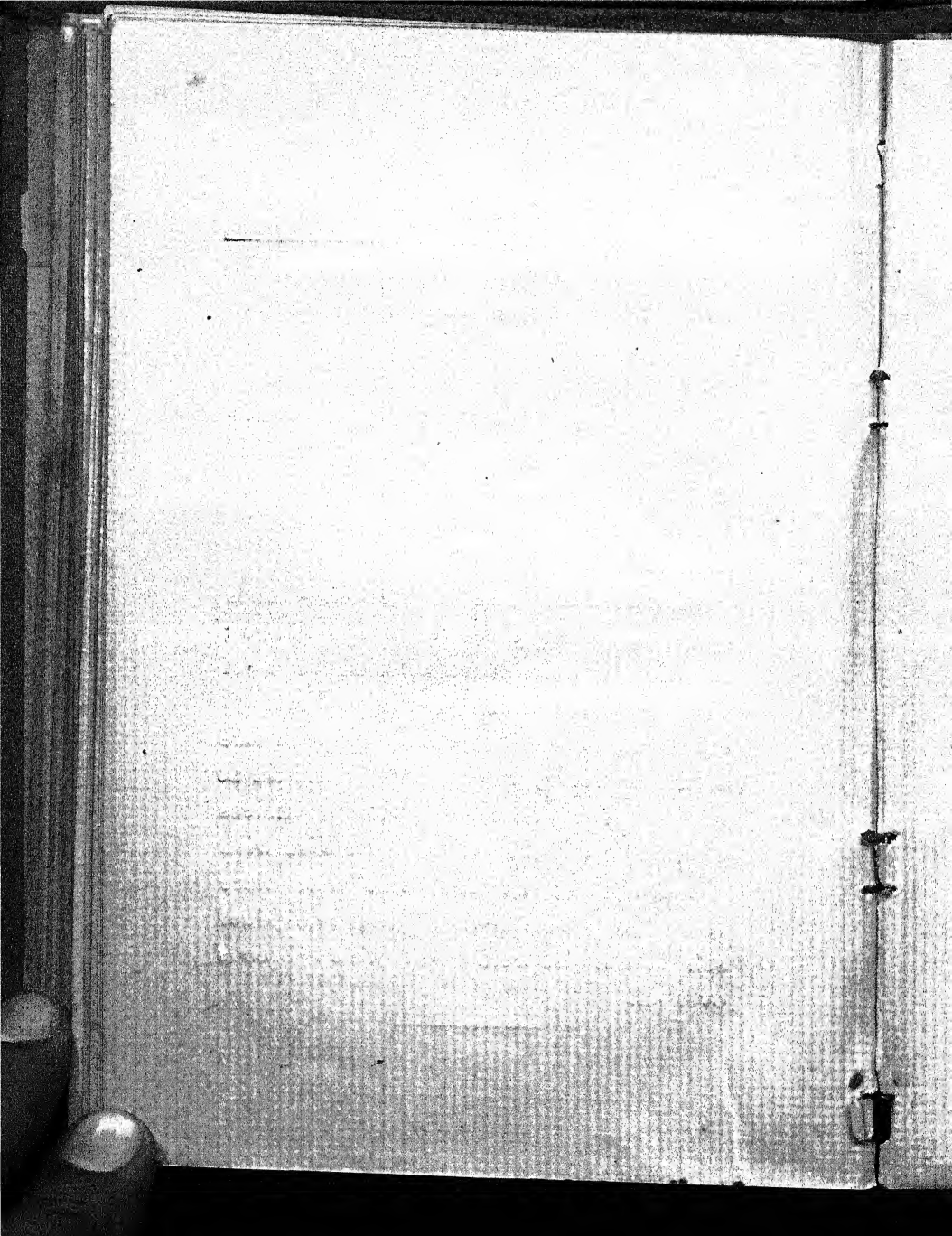
to the attainment of the highest possibilities ; but if we once shake off our lethargy and the dust that overlies our souls and prevents us from seeing what they are, it will not be altogether an impossibility for us to realise what we are and what latent powers we possess. All that is required of us is to see, with a clear vision,

That men may rise on stepping-stones

Of their dead selves to higher things ;  
and that, in accordance with the laws of evolution which hold good in the biological world, even as they hold good in the spiritual world, we can rise higher, till at last we feel in ourselves, with a fulness of sense, the real relation of the *Jiva* with the *Brahman* ; and then will take place the entire effacement of the individual self in that supreme self which broods over all.

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## OPINIONS ON "A LECTURE ON THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY."

"LUCIFER, *July 1895.*

This excellent lecture was read before the Agra College Literary Society by Mr. M. L. Bhattacharya, M. A., Professor of Sanskrit at the College. The book is not only reliable as to its contents, but also free from those barbarisms which generally spoil the pleasure of perusing the works of Hindus in our vernacular, for although they certainly write English far better than we can compose Bengali, Hindi, Guzerati, &c., yet very few men can write perfectly in two languages. The Lecture under notice is one of the most useful productions we have seen for a long time. It is superior to Dr. Deussen's address on Vedanta to the Bombay Asiatic Society, and to Professor Max-Muller's three Lectures on the Vedanta.

Philosophy. Mr. Bhattacharya shirks no difficulty as far as the Philosophy is concerned and meets all criticisms fairly and at the same time easily.

In brief Mr. Bhattacharya's Lecture is very pleasant reading, and he sets forth the philosophical outline of the Vedanta clearly and understandingly. Taking it all round, the little book is the best of its kind that has yet appeared.

G. R. S. M.

INDIA, *September 1895.*

Professor Bhattacharya delivered this lecture to the Agra College Literary Society, and many students of Indian wisdom will be glad that he has now offered it to the public. He professes to deal with the philosophical phase of the Vedanta system exclusively, treating it with marked ability and with a sympathetic fidelity etc.

INDIAN MIRROR, *May 16, 1895.*

In this lecture, a portion of which was read by the writer before the Agra College Literary Society, a general outline has been given of the system of the Vedanta Philosophy, and an attempt made to interpret it agreeably with the Philosophy and Science of the modern West. "The unique character of the Vedantic Philosophy," observes the writer, "lies in this that it can satisfy both a Huxley and a MaxMuller". The book concludes with extracts from the opinions of some of the Western *savants* on the system, not because the system stands in need of any certificates from them to establish its position, but because the writer has for his object to show how the system has challenged the admiration, and secured the reverence of European thinkers. The lecture gives undoubted evidence of the writer's erudi-



tion, and it may be earnestly recommended for perusal by those who wish to obtain in the course of a single treatise a clear *resume* of the abstruse themes with which Vedantism deals.

A. B. PATRIKA, *July 15, 1895.*

THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY.—A lecture on the Vedanta Philosophy was read before the Agra College Literary Society by Babu M. L. Bhattacharya, M. A., Sanskrit Professor, Agra College. The main object of the lecture, as the lecturer himself says in the preface, is to give the beginners a general outline of the highly abstruse system of the Vedanta Philosophy, and to examine briefly its value when tested by the modern ideas of the western philosophy. The learned lecturer has dealt in his lecture only with the philosophic portion of some of the Vedantic Sutras eschewing the religious por-



tion. This has no doubt enhanced the value of the discourse, as for centuries the followers of Sankaracharya and Ramanuja are fighting over the religious aspect of the meaning of the Sutras. We hope that every lover of Hindu Philosophy will read this interesting lecture which in a very lucid and easy style has explained the dry subject of the Vedanta Philosophy, and has made it approachable to the ordinary readers.

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HINDU, *14th August 1895.*

A LECTURE ON THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY :—We have received a copy of a lecture on the Vedanta Philosophy read before the Agra College Literary Society by Babu M. L. Bhattacharya, M. A., Professor of Sanskrit in that College. The well-known social reformer Mr. Lalla Baij Nath, B. A., presided. The lecturer, we are glad to say, has well succeeded in

his object which is only to explain the "Philosophical phase of the Vedanta system".

Mr. Bhattacharya's lecture is well worth the perusal of all who desire to know what the Philosophy of the Vedanta is.

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BHOWANIPORE, 19th May 1895.

FROM SIR ASUTOSH MUKHERJI

M. A., D. L., F. R. A. S. KT., &c, &c.

*Judge, High Court, Calcutta.*

Accept my best thanks for your interesting lecture which would do credit to any graduate of the University.

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May 30th 1895.

FROM THE HONOURABLE SIR GURUDAS

BANERJI, M. A., D. L., KT.

*Judge, High Court, Calcutta.*

I thank you for your kind present of a copy of your Lecture on the Vedanta

Philosophy. I have read the lecture and I think the lecture will be of use to the student in enabling him to understand some of the leading principles of the Vedanta Philosophy.

13th July 1895.

• BANGAVASI.

*Translated.*

This Lecture was delivered by Pandit Bhattacharya, Professor of Sanskrit, Agra College. It is a big Lecture in English on the Vedanta Philosophy, and has now come out in the form of a book. We recommend this book to those of our English knowing youths of the present day, who are too much carried away by English ideas and find fault with every thing around us. Probably this book is meant for them. In this Lecture the author has displayed much of his erudition and inquisitiveness.